1950s - Danny and Arlene

1959-08-07 Danny Entering Alaska

Nebraskan Cycles to Arctic

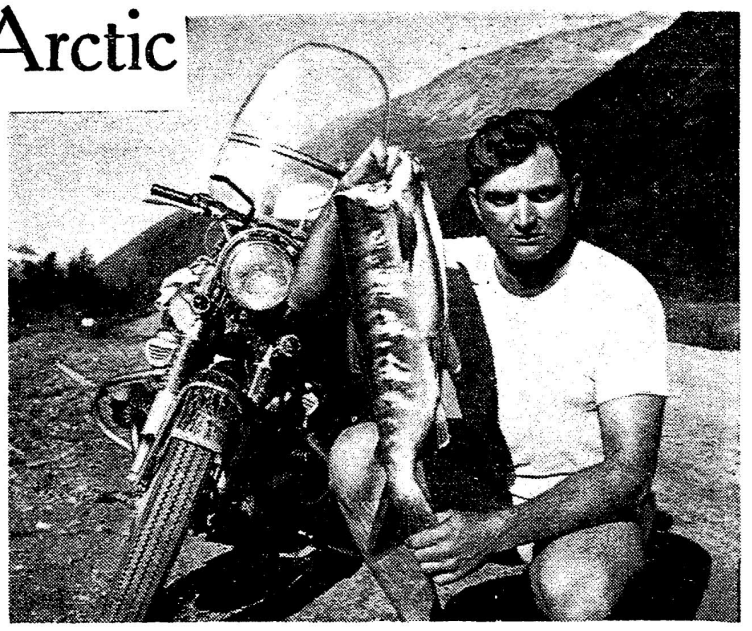
Niobrara, Neb.

LAST July 29 Danny Liska, age 30, had his sanity questioned by a Niobrara service station operator when he announced his intention of going to Alaska on a motorcycle. Dan, a veteran 'cyclist of 14 years, laughed it off and went on his way.

"We live in a too conventional world," said the young Niobrara rancher. "Ever since I read my first book by the late traveler-author Richard Halliburton, I've wanted to go places and see things."

When Dan was 16, a couple of young Lincoln friends drove to Niobrara on a motor scooter. They gave him a ride. He said to himself: "This is for me."

Dan purchased a motorcycle and began taking trips over the countryside. He has averaged 10 thousand miles a year, including trips to Mexico, Florida and California and visits to 14 national parks and monuments.



Dan Liska, Niobrara motorcyclist, holds the salmon that he caught by hand in a river near Valdez, Alaska. "The fish were so thick you could not help but catch them," said the Nebraskan.

The small tent beside the motorcycle was Dan's home during his nine-thousand-mile trip. This photo was taken on a lake beside Wyoming's Grand Tetons.

Just before entering Alaska on the Alcan Highway, Dan stopped to shoot a picture. Then he kissed the pavement.

He owns three motorcycles and belongs to four motorcycling organizations.

"The public thinks motor bike riders are a bunch of bums," he said. "Sure, there are bike bums. But there are a lot of other bum drivers on the road, too."

Dan graduated from Niobrara High School in 1945. He is married and operates a 940-acre ranch two miles east of Niobrara. His wife has accompanied him on some of the trips but did not go to Alaska.

o o o

Longest Way 'Round

THE Niobraran three years ago said he reached the decision to "quit dedicating my life to making money." He made up his mind while he, his motorcycle and tent were resting on the rim of the Grand Canyon.

"As I absorbed the scenery, never was I more keenly aware of how trivial are the efforts of man," he said.

A small office in the basement of his ranch home contains maps, camera equipment, travel guides and a set of Richard Halliburton's books.

The Nebraskan made the trip to Alaska as the "long way around" to Dodge City, Kans. He had been invited to attend the Dodge City Motorcycle Races.

"I wanted to win the trophy for having traveled the furthest to get to the races," said Dan. "I also was interested in seeing how my cycle would take the trip over the Alcan Highway."

o o o

Cycle Well Prepared

SINCE 12 hundred miles of the Alcan are graveled, Dan installed a metal shield near the base of his two-wheel vehicle to prevent rocks from damaging the motor. He installed two auxiliary gas tanks which along with the cycle's regular tank gave the machine a capacity of 13½ gallons.

"I made 50 miles to the gallon over the worst of the drive," he said. "Under good driving conditions I made about 93 miles to the gallon."

Dan took his tent, cooking utensils and two cameras. He slept and ate outdoors most of the time. "In an effort to meet more people, I would stop occasionally at a cafe," he added.

His nine-thousand-mile trip took him from Niobrara across Wyoming through Montana and then into Canada's Province of Alberta. He got on the Alcan at Dawson Creek.

After arriving in Alaska, Dan drove from Fairbanks to Circle City (at the Arctic Circle.) He then went to Anchorage, Tok Junction and finally White Horse (in the Yukon) where he and his motorcycle went by train to Skagway. Next, he boarded a ship that took him to Vancouver from where he continued his journey to Dodge City, Kans.

"I won the trophy for having traveled the furthest to get to the Dodge City races," he said. "So there would be no doubt, I had registered my motorcycle in Anchorage and it bore Alaskan license plates."

o o o

Trouble in 'Civilization'

AFTER the races were over, Mr. Liska returned home September 8. The total cost of the trip was only 280 dollars.

"I had a swell time and saw some of the most beautiful scenery in the world," the motor bike rider stated. "The only mechanical trouble was when I blew a tire on a four-lane highway near Portland, Ore."

He met three Swiss misses who were fulfilling a life-time ambition of traveling the Alcan on bicycles. He camped with Canadians. He took more than five hundred photographs of people and places.

"Animals were no trouble," he said. "But I had a problem of keeping the mosquitoes off my neck."

His drive along the graveled Alcan was treacherous because of chuck holes. His average speed was about 30 to 40 miles per hour.

"When I reached Alaska the road was paved," he said. "I stopped my bike and kissed the pavement."

Auto drivers who met him looked twice as they passed his motorcycle. "I laughed," he said. "They had no idea how much fun they were missing."

His most unusual experience occurred at Valdez, Alaska, where Dan camped near a river bank. "The salmon were headed upstream to spawn," he said. "They made so much noise that I could not sleep."

The next day, Dan walked into the water and caught a salmon by hand. "The fish were so thick that it was like slopping hogs."

Dan found that Alaskans, like Nebraskans, thought he had lost his marbles. At Circle City, Alaska, two Indian service station attendants were filling his gas tanks.

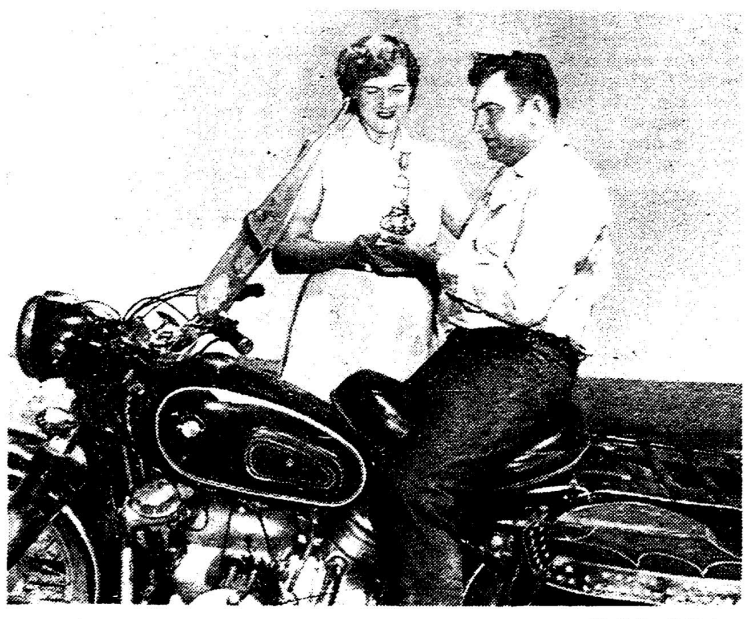
One of the helpers asked if Dan had come up the highway on his motorcycle. "Yes," answered the Nebraskan.

"Ugh, him crazy," replied the Indian.

"Maybe I am," said Dan. "But I'm sure having fun proving it."

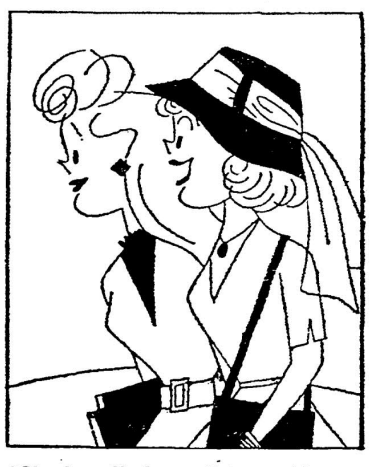
What about next year's adventure on a motorcycle? Maybe a trip around Europe?

"If he does, I'm going with him," answered Mrs. Liska.



—World-Herald Photo.

Dan and his wife, Arlene, examine the trophy that he received at the Dodge City Motorcycle Races. It was awarded to the Niobrara man for traveling the furthest by motorcycle to the meet.



"She has all the qualities you'd want in a rival—stupidity, no style sense, poor sportsmanship—"

1959-09-20 Nebraskan Cycles to Arctic, Omaha World Herald

Dan Liska Wins Trophy For Farthest Distance

Last July 29, Danny Liska, age 30, had his sanity questioned by a Niobrara service station operator when Dan announced his intentions of going to Alaska on a motorcycle.

Dan purchased a motorcycle and began taking trips over the countryside after a couple of young Lincoln friends gave him a ride on a scooter when he was 16. Dan said to himself "this is for me."

He has averaged 10,000 miles a year since that time, taking trips to Florida, California, including Mexico and visits to 14 national parks and monuments. He now owns three motorcycles.

Dan graduated from Niobrara High School in 1945. He is married, and his wife, whose name is Arlene, has accompanied him on some of the trips he has made, but she did not go to Alaska.

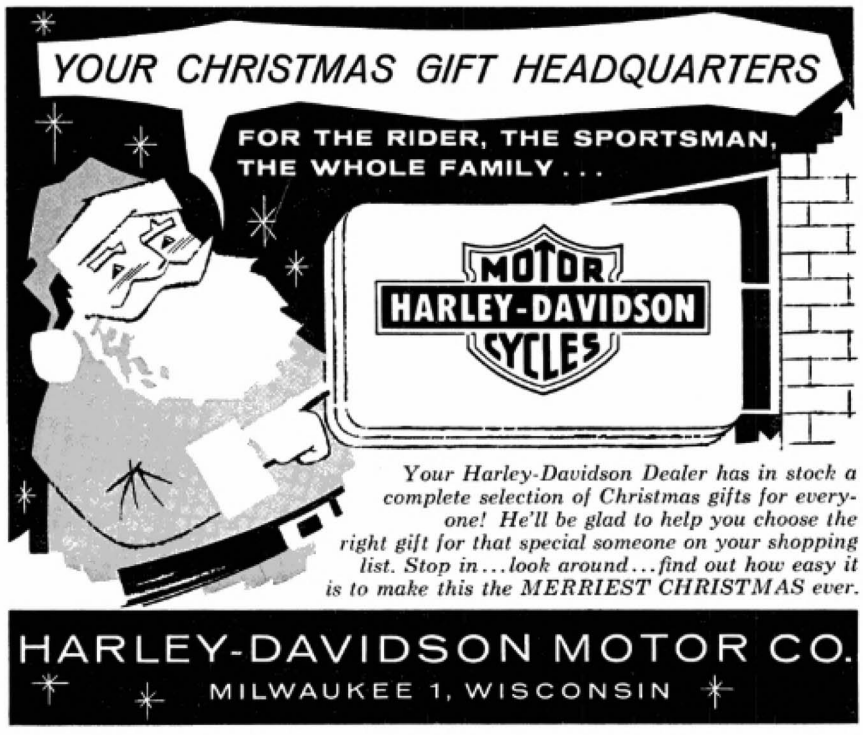
The Nebraskan made the trip to Alaska as the "long way around" to Dodge City, Kansas. He had been invited to attend the Dodge City motorcycle races. Dan said "he wanted to win the trophy for having traveled the furthest to get to the races", also said "he was interested in seeing how his cycle would take the trip over the Alcan Highway."

"I won the trophy for having traveled the furthest to get to the Dodge City races" he said. So there would be no doubt I had registered my motorcycle in Anchorage and it bore Alaskan license tags."

After the race, Dan returned home. The total cost of the trip was $208.00.

What about next year's adventure on a motorcycle? Maybe a trip around Europe?

Now Is The Time To Renew Your Subscription To AMERICAN MOTORCYCLING



1959-12 Danny Liska Wins Long Distance Trophy, AMA-3

Fancy Free

— By —

DANNY LISKA

(Editor's Note: With this issue begins a new series of articles written by Danny Liska, Niobrara, well known to many Plainview people from his previous articles printed in this newspaper, his personal acquaintanceships and his slide lectures about his many travels by motorcycle. Danny is president of the Niobrara Community Club, is a rancher and also belongs to the Plainview Throttle Twisters Club.)

Have you ever watched a hawk soaring in the sky?

Did you ever see such abandon? For a moment he hesitates, suspended in the sky and the next moment he has soared up, up into the blue. Around and around he circles, scanning the whole earth. He tilts his wing tips and effortlessly he slides downward only to be caught by a new air current to be carried high up into the firmament that is his home. Unpredictable is the nature of his flight which has no pattern, no destination. The whole sky is his to enjoy, to explore. The soaring hawk is the embodiment of romance for he soars where the breezes are gentlest, the skies bluest and wherever fancy dictates.

You and I — let us too be FANCY FREE!

Let us journey wherever fancy dictates. From the tropics to the arctic we shall wander, from the indigo waters of the Pacific to the glistening white sands of the beaches of the Atlantic. Let us savor the beauties of nature that are ours but for the discovery, search out the unusual, the macabre, the mysterious and the enchanting. We shall listen to legends recounted to us by the sourdoughs of the North, the Hillbilly of the South, prospector of the Mojave Desert, the Wolf and Crow Indian of the Yukon, the Aztec of Mexico. At night as we sit about our campfire the night wind will bring to our ears tales of Phantoms telling us stories of glory and of tragedy, happiness and grief.

Since we do not have the wings of a hawk, we will have to settle for less. Let us then journey to these places by the next best means — by motorcycle.

"BY MOTORCYCLE!" you say "Isn't that a bit too uncomfortable and dangerous?"

Not at all. How else can we travel to these many places and smell, feel, hear and see all that is about us. The scent of Magnolias in full bloom will tease our nostrils in Dixie. The rollicking music of guitars and the latin voice of a singing Mariache will drift to our ears from the Mexican cantina across the cobblestone street of Taxco. We will hear the whistle of prairie dogs warning of our approach in the Badlands of South Dakota. The Giant California Redwoods about us will rise above our heads for hundreds of feet ,and how small we will feel as these monarchs allow us to pass beneath. At night along the Alcan Highway of the Yukon we scent burning birchwood and smoking salmon and perhaps we may hear from beyond the muskeg the wail of a timber wolf.

From the glaciers and tundra of Alaska we shall journey to the pestilent jungles of Mexico where one night we shall go alligater hunting among the mangrove swamps near Puerto Marques. At night we shall dare to penetrate into the smoldering lava beds of the erupting Volcano Paracuin which is hurtling cherry-red boulders skyward but a few thousand feet away.

The daring Matadors will thrill us with their courage as they defy the infuriated toreorros of the Mexican bull rings. We will lose the pesos we wagered at the rooster fights. Always we shall seek out the unusual, leaving the conventional for the more banal souls. Into the jungles of Vera Cruz we shall plunge in search of secluded pyramids and temples once the scene of human sacrifices and now inhabited only by lizards, jaguars and bats. The challenge of the 18,000 ft. sacred mountain of Popocatepetl shall not go unanswered and we shall take picks and spikes and ascend its icy slopes. We shall play the fighting sailfish near Acapulco on the end of our tackle, explore bat-infested caves and take part in the flirtation promenade at the plaza of Monterrey.

Yes we will go by motorcycle, and you will know why when we overtake the aged grandmother chugging along the country road in North Carolina. We pull alongside, tip our helmet and bid her "Good Morning" ... her smile beams with the radiance of youth as she returns our greeting. As we pull ahead we glance back — she is still smiling.

1960-05-25 Fancy Free, Column by Danny Liska, Plainview News

Danny Liska Adventure Hits North, South Ends of Continent

Other Photos Page Five

Adjectives could probably not describe very well the past year for Danny Liska, columnist for this newspaper. They would include "adventuresome", "exciting", "interesting", etc.

And probably they would sound tame when being considered with the next few weeks and months for the Niobrara farmer, commercial club president, cyclist, writer, travelogue artist.

For Danny is in the midst of covering a long stretch of territory by motorcycle, affectionately called "Tumbleweed". Danny has been to the tip of Alaska — the northernmost point of the North American continent— and has traveled south, south, south, and will continue south until he hits the southernmost tip of the South American continent.

Liska will be the first person in history known to make the complete stretch, totaling many thousands of miles, by motorcycle and following a land route (that is, where there is land.)

It was last year when Danny made it to the "End of the Road, Artic Circle City, Alaska". Right now he has reached the "End of the Pan American Highway — Here Begins the Darien Gap" in Panama.

So far, as Danny put it, "It had been an adventure packed journey, riding my R60 BMW across the ten countries which separate the signs. The Tumble Weed had carried me across frozen tundra and past creeping glaciers, over quivering muskeg and through tall forests, through blinding snow and parched deserts. We have ridden among coconut groves which bent before the gentle caress of the Carribean trade winds and besides the roaring surf of the Pacific. The Tumble Weed has crossed rivers alive with salmon, as well as those with fresh water shark, mantee (sea cows) and crocodiles. From the snowy slopes of the Mexican volcano Popowe went in quest of others, such as the mysterious Izalco of El Salvador, the erupting Cerro Negro of Nicaragua and even ventured into the very crater of the restless Irazu of Costa Rica."

Many Different Roads

Road surfaces have been varied, too. As Danny said, "The long road from the Arctic to the southern continent has many faces. From the frozen tundra along the Steese Highway at the northern end of the Yukon border and does not appear until 1200 miles later near Dawson Creek B.C. The magnificent highway of the United States continue into Mexico and then cease abruptly at the abominable "El Tapon" at the Guatemalan border. The highway in Guatemala is both very good and very bad. The roads in British Honduras, although paved, are but 12 feet wide and too narrow for cars to meet or pass. To further complicate matters, everyone there drives on the left side of the roads. Salvador has pavement throughout but perhaps is the most hazardous of all because the highways are dominated by hoards of ox carts. Honduras has very little surfaced highway — and fortunately so, as the paved section is in terrible shape. The roads of Nicaragua are mostly paved but the northern half of the road is completely in the possession of the herds of cattle which roam freely along it."

After returning from Alaska, Liska left this past summer for his southern journey. In September, his wife, Arlene, joined him for a portion of the journey, returning only recently to their Niobrara farm.

Mrs. Liska commented on her portion of the journey as follows:

"We journeyed the inter-American highway from San Jose, Costa Rica, viewing decoratively painted oxen drawn carts, to Panama City in the Temperal or rain season. One day took us from San Jose to Cartago, Costa Rica, to view the Volcano Irazu, 11,322 feet and active.

To Peak of Death

"Forty-five miles below Cartago, the highway reaches the famous Cerrode la Muerte (called the peak of death by the Indians). Many have been killed in the process of making this mountain crossing. The elevation is about 11,000 feet, above the clouds and very cold. On we go down to San Isidro del General where the unfinished highway section begins for 137 miles to the border of Panama. This portion of the trip was to take five weeks.

"Thirty-nine bridges remain to be built. Most people tell us it is impossible to go any further, but we adventure on. Five of the rivers are crossed by plank or temporary bridges. Arriving at Buenos Aires, the Tumble Weed had a new garage for the evening in the form of the lobby of a hotel. It took three days to arrange the next leg of the journey.

"It covered two small rivers by jeep and the much larger River Platanarous in a scraper pulled by a D-8 caterpillar and pushed by a D-9. On we went through mountains and jungle to a workers camp. The largest river was crossed in a canoe made from one log hollowed out. A night was spent in an Indian village where an Indian family vacated their home to permit us to spend the night in their bamboo and palm leave house.

People Friendly

"Danny noted, and I also in my portion of the trip, that the people have always tried to cooperate. Many times they could not understand what we wanted, but they'd still try to be helpful. For two days the only food we had was oranges and bananas.

"Further journeys included assistance by helicopter, motor car train, self-propelled three car diesel train and bus."

And then the Liskas came to the most daring portion of their long journey, and because of the danger, Danny "ordered" his wife to return home.

For now, Danny has come to the 350 miles of the Darien Jungle — the gap that joins Columbia, South America, and Panama. It is solely inhabited by two types of Indians — the Cunas on the Atlantic Coast and the Cho Chos on the Pacific. To this day they live as their ancestors lived — in belief and dress.

The Darien Jungle is said to be impassable — that a road may never be able to be built there. But adventuresome as Danny is, he's going to try to make it by cycle.

The weeks or months ahead will probably bring all kinds of adventure, danger, excitement, etc.

And finally, after passing through the Darien Jungle, Danny will more or less "have it made", for the balance of the trip through South America will be through comparatively safe and modern country. However he must reach the tip of South America, Terra Del Fuego, by February, before adverse weather conditions set in.

Rumors here stated that Danny had been to Cuba and was held prisoner there. These were false. He never was in Cuba. His columns, headed "Fancy Free", have been slowed up due to mail mixups. When they arrive again, they will appear in print.

In the meantime, the News columnist has a big goal — from the north north to the south south, by motorcycle and completely by land. We wish luck to Danny and his "Tumble Weed".

FINALLY to the end of the Pan American Highway where the Darien Gap begins. The next 350 miles will bring untold adventure.

1960-12-14 Danny Liska Hits North, South Ends of Continent, Panama, Plainview News

Danny Liska and his motorcycle move across the River Terraba in Costa Rica. The canoe was borrowed from a native.

This highway maintainer and crew helped the Liskas cross the River Volcan. Mrs. Liska is up above with the motorcycle.

Hmm! Cycling in Costa Rica -:- -:- Nebraskan and Wife Cross 39 Wild Rivers

(Editor's Note: Danny Liska, the Richard Halliburton of Niobrara, Neb., is on a motorcycle trip to the southern tip of South America. The September 26 issue of The Magazine of the Midlands reported his eyewitness description of a Communist-inspired uprising in El Salvador. Mr. Liska's wife, Arlene, in October decided to join him for part of the trip. She flew to San Jose, Costa Rica. From there, she, Danny and the motorcycle headed south to Panama over the still-being-constructed Pan-American Highway. They reached Panama City in late November and Arlene returned to Niobrara with photographs to give this report to The Magazine.)

By Mrs. Arlene Liska

DANNY once told me that when some one tells him he "can't," that is when adventure begins. I guess my husband knows what he is talking about. We recently had quite an adventure, skidding across Costa Rica during Central America's rainy season after everybody told us it couldn't be done.

I had wired Danny to meet me at the San Jose Airport. It was raining when I arrived. We spent three days making arrangements for our trip. Every one from Government officials to highway construction people told Danny that the Pan-American Highway, now under construction, was impassable.

Mrs. Liska

They pointed out that there were 39 bridges still to be built and that during the rainy season most of the streams were at flood stage.

But we started anyway. Our trip from San Jose to Cartago was easy because the road was in better condition than we expected. In fact, I was quite optimistic.

We went to the top of the famous Irazu Volcano, still active, 11,322 feet above sea level. We looked into the steaming crater and then took the mud-splattered ride back to Cartago. Danny nearly skidded off the road twice but I was to learn this was just the beginning of our adventure.

Some of the women readers may wonder what a girl wears while traveling with her husband on a motorcycle trip through Central America. I wore a leather jacket and a culotte sun dress.

o o o

Oh, for a Bridge

SOME 45 miles below Cartago the highway reaches Cerrode la "peak of death." It was very cold as we passed "above the clouds."

We continued our journey on to San Isidro del Geneial. It was there that the most difficult part of our trip began. We still were 137 miles from the border of Panama. It was necessary to get permission to move onto the unfinished highway grade.

It was easy to cross the first five rivers because there were planks on which Danny could drive the motorcycle. But when we reached Rio Volcan, there was no bridge and the current was as wild as the Niobrara River during a flood. Danny decided to test the depth of the stream by wading while carrying a big rock. "This will keep me from being washed away," he told me.

"Be careful, honey," I advised.

His walk to mid-stream proved that the river was too deep to attempt to cross with a motorcycle. We didn't know what to do.

"Shall we go back?" I asked.

"I'm not going back," said Danny.

About one hour later a large maintainer for a highway construction company appeared. It was already loaded with 11 workers, a construction supervisor and oil and gas drums but the supervisor told us that he would take us and the motorcycle over the river.

We loaded onto the maintainer and went across with ease. In fact, this same maintainer took us over six more streams until we reached Buenos Aires, Costa Rica.

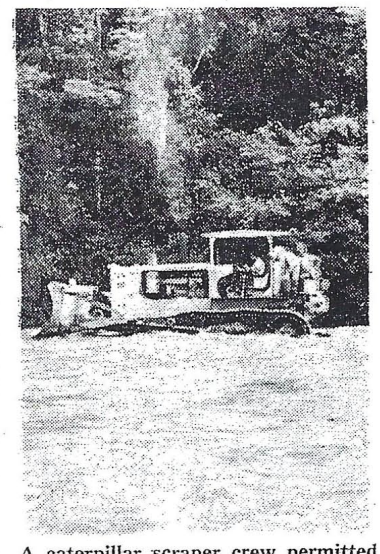
o o o

The Best Hotel, but—

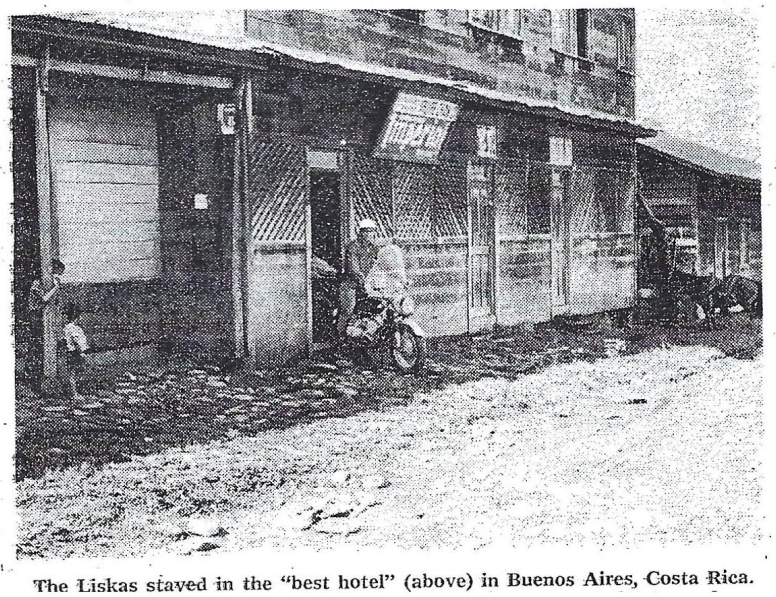
THE next three days were spent arranging the rest of our travel. We stayed at the best hotel in town but I'm afraid Nebraskans, if they saw the building, would think it looked more like a corn crib. We were permitted to park our motorcycle in the lobby.

More help was needed from highway workers after we left Buenos Aires. A large scraper helped us cross the River Platanarious. This same vehicle, normally used for construction in the jungle and mountains, led us to a workers' camp where we spent the night.

In the camp we heard many stories about Indian legends. Danny had been in Central America long enough so that he could converse in Spanish with every one.



A caterpillar scraper crew permitted the Niobrara couple to join them for a ride across the Platanarious River.



The Liskas stayed in the "best hotel" (above) in Buenos Aires, Costa Rica.

The following day we experienced our most difficult task—trying to cross the River Terraba. This large river was at flood stage and the only possible way to get across was by boat. Danny borrowed an Indian canoe, which was nothing more than a hollowed-out log, and we moved through the water. The current was very strong but Danny, having spent most of his life on the Missouri and Niobrara Rivers in Nebraska, had no difficulty making it.

Farther down the highway we came upon a landslide. It was impossible to drive the motorcycle so Danny left it with an Indian family and we went on.

I neglected to mention that Central America is full of snakes. Some are poisonous, others are not. While we were walking along the road, I came within inches of stepping on a coral snake. Danny said they are very poisonous and that I was lucky I had missed it.

o o o

On to South America

OUR next stop was at the Indian village of Rey Curre, where Danny asked the village leader if we might stay overnight. Permission was granted and one family allowed us to occupy their dwelling made of bamboo and palm leaves. The only foods we tasted were oranges and bananas.

I want to say that most of the people we met in Costa Rica were friendly. They asked questions and we asked questions. They couldn't understand why Danny wanted to cross Central or South America on a motorcycle. Most everywhere we were made to feel welcome.

Before reaching Panama, we stayed in a banana camp owned by the United Fruit Company. From this point, we were able to travel the rest of the way to Panama City by rail.

I spent several days with Danny in Panama City while he made arrangements to go through the jungles to Panama on a route which eventually will be the Pan-American Highway. This will be his greatest ordeal before he reaches Argentina.

When I left for home, Danny returned to Costa Rica and retrieved his motorcycle. The landslide had been cleared and he was able to get back to Panama with his machine.

He now is moving through Panama's Darien Jungle. This is a real adventure. Many have started out only to resort to the ocean or turn back. You can be sure that Danny won't turn back.

His biggest problem going through this dense area alone is that some of the natives do not appreciate visitors.

My husband's ambition is to reach Argentina by February. Knowing

1960-12-25 Cycling in Costa Rica, Omaha World Herald

Liska Covers 70 Miles Of 'Impassable' Jungle

Danny Liska, columnist for this newspaper who is presently attempting to be the first person to travel by motorcycle from the northernmost tip of Alaska to the southernmost tip of South America, is making progress.

In a report in this paper two weeks ago, he had reached the Darien Gap — the gap that joins Columbia, South America, and Panama. As stated before, it is inhabited by two types of Indians — the Cunas on the Atlantic coast and the Cho Choa on the Pacific. To this day they live as their ancestors lived — in belief and dress.

The Darien Jungle is said to be impassable -- that a road may never be built there.

But Danny has dented the jungle about 70 miles by Wednesday, December 14, the date of his last letter to his wife, Mrs. Danny Liska at Niobrara. By now, who knows, he may have made the entire trip of 350 miles.

Mrs. Liska received word from El Real as he was about to leave for Turpo and then Medellin.

Mrs. Liska's letter reported in part:

"I obtained an Indian Cho Cho guide, who with his wife took me from Chepo, the start of the Darien Gap, through the mountainous and jungle filled Darien Mountain Range to a village of the Cuna Indians. As we entered the village, three chieftains immediately held council to decide whether we could go on.

"Their first decision was to permit us to go on. But soon they changed their minds and decided that we must go back. After considerable talking, I was able to convince them to permit me to go on. However they decided to only give me a guide — a witch doctor — for one day's journey and after that I'd be on my own.

"During their court, they took the guide and his wife out for punishment three times. Upon their return, I could see no marks of physical punishment, but their eyes showed considerable terror. The Cho Cho guide and his wife were forced to remain in the village, however, when I left. What has happened to them, I do not know.

"I was disappointed in that the Cuna Indians would not permit me to take pictures while I was in their village.

"Upon leaving the Cuna village I came to a mahogany workers camp where a colored fellow took me on to El Real. One river was flooding and we had to cross some ten miles by canoe with motor.

"Mystery" Telephone

"The mysteriousness of the natives was brought close by the fact that no one traveled ahead of us from the mahogany camp, yet the Indians of El Real knew I was coming."

The journey now goes over the mountains to Turbo and then on to Medellin and on south. Upon arriving at Turbo, Danny feels he will "have it made" as far as the rest of the trip goes.

1960-12-28 Liska Covers 70 Miles of 'Impassible' Jungle, Plainview News

1961 Danny in Darien with Monkey Paw Soup, Darien Gap

1961-08 BMW Up to the axles in mud in Patagonia

1961-08 Near Ushuaia on his last day on the road

1961-08 Near Ushuaia, Argentina

Danny Makes It!

Danny Liska, well-known here for his motorcycle travels and lectures on his travels, has now hit the tip of South America, according to word received here.

Danny was attempting to be the first man to travel the distance from the northern tip of North America to the souhtern tip of South America all by motorcycle.

He's now done it!

He will remain at the southern tip for some time yet seeking information on customs and items of interest for his future lectures and stories.

His address will be:
Danny Liska,
care of U. S. Consul
Consulado de Estatos Unidos,
Buenos Aires, Argentina

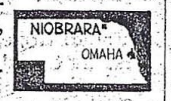
1961-08-30 Danny Makes It!, Ushuaia, Plainview News

Niobrara Man Cycles to South America Tip

The World-Herald's News Service.

Niobrara, Neb. — A rural mail carrier dropped a letter in the box at the Dan Liska ranch last week.

The letter, addressed to Mrs. Liska, was postmarked "Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina."



The message:

"I've made it. A step farther south and I would get my feet wet."

The letter was from her husband, who had just completed a trip by motorcycle from Niobrara to the tip of South America.

It was just a year ago that Dan left Niobrara for the southernmost point of Argentina.

Several years earlier he had set a goal to cycle to the Arctic Circle in North America and to the tip of South America.

In 1959 he fulfilled half of his dream. He drove up the Alcan Highway into Alaska, continued north to Circle City and pushed beyond, where there was no road and natives said no similar machine had been before.

Last September he crossed into Mexico on the second — and almost impossible—half.

He had fairly easy going through Central America and Panama until he hit the Darien Jungle. Part of the way he loaded his motorbike into a dugout canoe which was poled through swamps and across rivers.

He emerged from the jungles in Colombia, continued through Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia into Chile, where he encountered three major problems—the Andes Mountains, winter weather and customs.

He won a long fight with the Argentine Government to take his motorbike into that counry from Santiago, Chile. He fought six-foot snows through the mountains down to the Strait of Magellan.

A hop by boat took him and his machine to Tierra del Fuego and thence to the town of Ushuaia—the southernmost town and not many miles from Cape Horn.

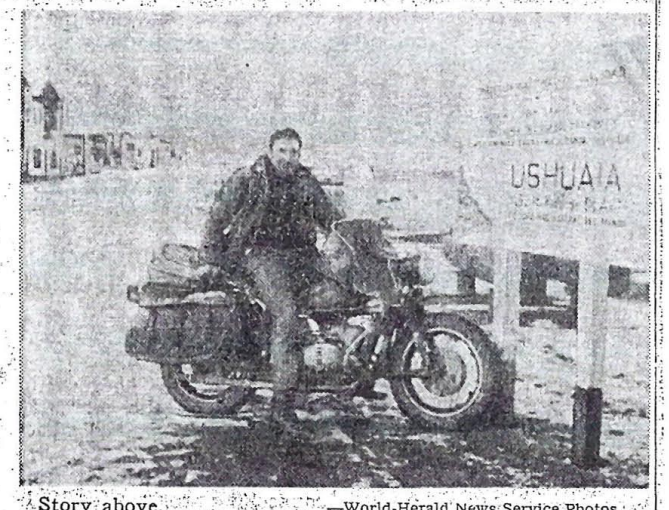
What's next?

"Home to Nebraska, and probably by boat," wrote Dan. "Niobrara is going to look mighty good."

Story at left. —World-Herald Map.

From Niobrara . . . "As far north, as far south."

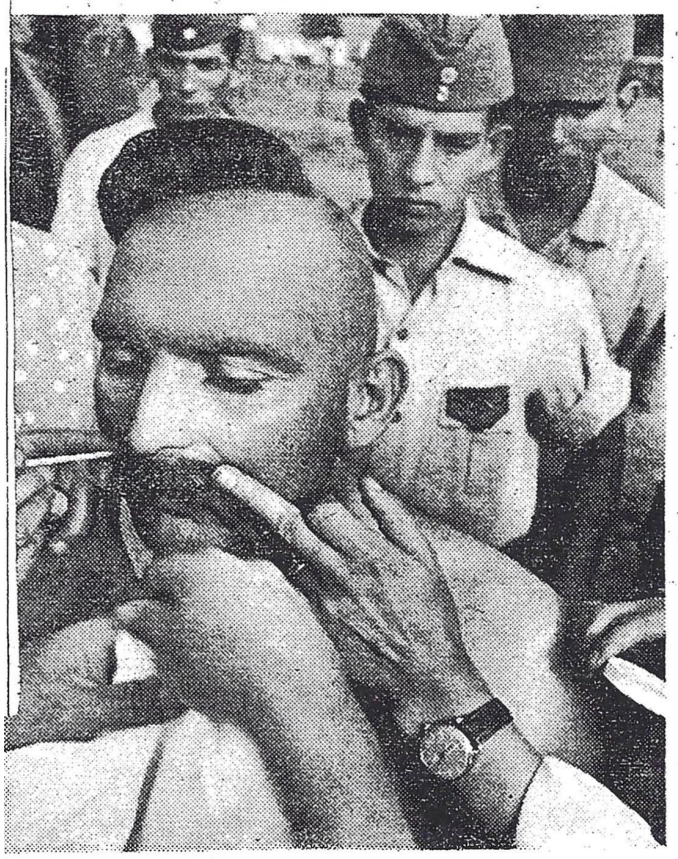
Liska in Alaska . . . Above Arctic Circle.



Story above. —World-Herald News Service Photos.

Liska in Ushuaia . . . Below Strait of Magellan.

1961-09 Niobrara Man Cycles to South America Tip, Omaha World Herald



Our Correspondent in South America

TWO weeks ago the Magazine of the Midlands carried the latest installment in the adventures of Dan Liska, the Niobrara, Neb., rancher who is traveling through the jungles of South America. It was mentioned briefly that he was appearing as an extra in the cast of Harold Hecht's seven-million-dollar motion picture production, "Taras Bulba," now being filmed in Argentina.

Herewith we publish a picture of our South American correspondent, getting shorn for a "scalp lock" in this Sixteenth Century picture of the Cossacks.

He is the only extra who speaks both English and Spanish. Said the studio of Mr. Liska: "Although he is not in line for an Oscar, we think he should get some sort of medal for bravery and the members of the Argentine Army in the background must think so, too."

We concur.

Mr. Liska believes he is the first person to travel all the way from northern Alaska to the southern tip of Argentina by vehicle. He originally planned to make the trip on his motorcycle over the Pan-American Highway but soon found that in Central America the highway remains on the drawing board.

Through the jungles of Colombia and Venezuela he traveled by foot and dugout canoe through areas of friendly and unfriendly Indians. Although he had to abandon his motorcycle, he carried its Nebraska license plates in his knapsack so that at least a part of the 'cycle went the route.

1961-11-26 Our Correspondent in South America 'Taras Bulba', Magazine of the Midlands

Latin America Odyssey Ended—

Wandering Dan Returns to Sand Hills Ranch

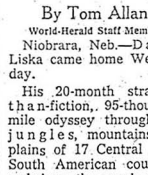
By Tom Allan
World-Herald Staff Member

Niobrara, Neb.—Danny Liska came home Wednesday.

His 20-month stranger-than-fiction, 95-thousand-mile odyssey through the jungles, mountains and plains of 17 Central and South American countries ended on the porch of his Diamond Horseshoe Ranch in the arms of his surprised wife, Arlene.

Ended was another chapter in the life of Nebraska's wandering adventurer, philosopher, diplomat on a motorcycle, photographer, movie star and World-Herald correspondent.

The big rancher, whose wanderlust has given him the urge to fulfill the dormant desire in most men's souls "to see what's on the other side of the mountain," may be the first person to travel from the northern tip of Alaska to the southernmost tip of South America.



Readers of The World-Herald's Magazine of the Midalnds have followed his photos and stories of such fantastic adventures as his trial for life by primitive jungle Indians and being attacked by vampire bats.

He'll conclude his series in future issues of the magazine.

But for the next few days Wandering Dan, minus 34 pounds and with a shaven pate instead of his usual shock of black hair, will be "collecting thoughts" while replanting his roots in the rolling hills of home.

Danny was supposed to be still in South America Tuesday when he walked into The World-Herald news room. As old friends gasped in astonishment at his shaven head Danny explained:

"I've been the action double for Yul Brynner in a picture, "Taras Bulba" United Artists has been filming in Argentina."

Danny had wandered on the set, got a job as an extra and then with his Nebraska-style horsemanship beat out the storied gauchos of the Pampas to be the star's double in the Sixteenth Century story of the Cossacks.

"They don't want to risk a high priced star, so I had to do all the battle scenes and dangerous riding parts. It was a job that took lots of guts or ignorance. I was able to eliminate intelligence from my mind."

All Danny lost was his hair.

With the picture finished, there was the lure of home accentuated by the illness of his father. He'd hoped to surprise his family for Christmas but was balked by transportation delays.

A cargo plane that had taken a load of goats to Lima, Peru, returned to Miami New Year's Eve with a load of tropical fish—and Danny. He took a bus to Omaha.

"Biggest trouble I had the whole trip was trying to understand the people in Louisiana and Alabama," he said.

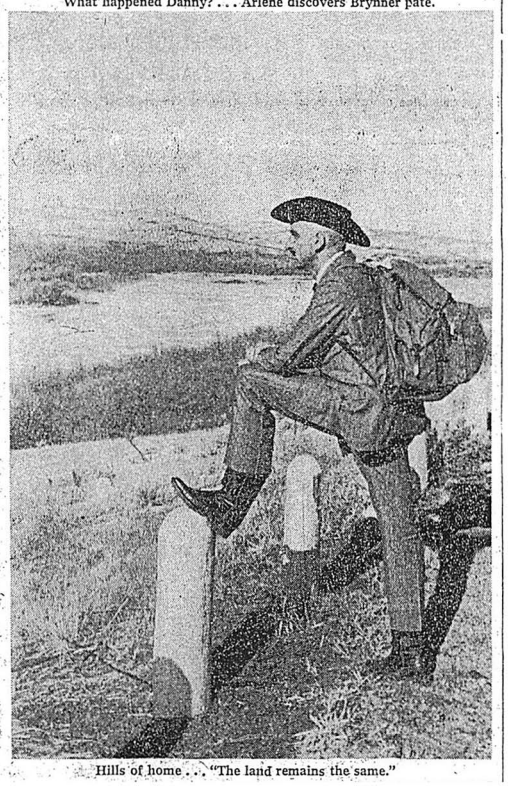
Danny, who'd floated down a jungle stream in a dugout with a witch doctor, put his life for the last lap of his trip home in the hands of a World-Herald roving reporter.

Mrs. Liska, who had last seen Danny a year ago when she joined him for a month to skid across Costa Rica on his motorcycle during the rainy season, was still unaware of Danny's arrival.

During the four-hour trip the wanderer talked of his love of people in many lands, of their needs, and the need for better understanding among nations. His mind was still a thousand miles away in the thatched

Turn to Page 6, Column 2

What happened Danny? . . . Arlene discovers Brynner pate.



Hills of home . . . "The land remains the same."

Story below. —World-Herald Photo.

Jiggs defends homestead . . . "Damn it, he's forgotten."

Wandering Dan Returns to Ranch

Continued from Page 1.

huts and palatial homes in which he had lived in his quest to understand.

Then came the hills of home and the glow that all homeward-bound men know filled his heart and mind.

"Please go slower," he said, "I want to look, to feel."

Then standing high on Three Rivers Hill overlooking his ranch and the Missouri, Verdigre and Niobrara Rivers, he mused:

"Cities change so quickly. The land is better. It never changes."

There was a disappointment as he walked up the walk to his home. An old black dog charged out barking and bristling.

"Damn it, Jiggs. Don't you know me?"

Then Arlene, gasping in momentary disbelief, rushed into his arms. She stepped back to look.

"It's you. It's you."

Slipping out of her coat, she grabbed him again, accidentally knocking off his sombrero.

Arlene gasped as his head gleamed in the sun.

"What happened, Danny?" she gasped, and then fought back an attack of giggles.

Moments later as she fed him his favorite chicken she timidly reached up and caressed the hairless expanse.

Then impulsively she jumped up and gave it a tender kiss.

"You can have Yul Brynner. I'll take my Danny Liska any time."

Danny was home.

1962-01-05 Wandering Dan Returns to Sand Hills Ranch, Omaha World Herald

Danny's Home

Yes, at long last, Danny Liska, author of "Fancy Free" which has appeared periodically in this newspaper, is back home.

He's home — filled with months and months and miles and miles of traveling and wonderful experiences.

Danny arrived home last Wednesday after a 20-month trip to the southern tip of South America which culminated a big dream of his — to be the first person to travel from the northern tip of North America to the southern tip of South America traveling by motorcycle.

To attempt to mention all his accomplishments would take unending words. Acquaintances and friends and interested persons may expect to see his stories in the near future, see his pictures and hear his comments. Let that suffice for now.

In the meantime, welcome back Danny!

More Photos Page Eight

DANNY, together with his wife, stand in front of the Mauck Studio window which was painted to welcome Danny back to Plainview. He has many friends here, is a member of the local motorcycle club and has written for this newspaper. (Mauck Photo)

1962-01-10 Back Home, Plainview News

Yul, Dan Teamed In Film

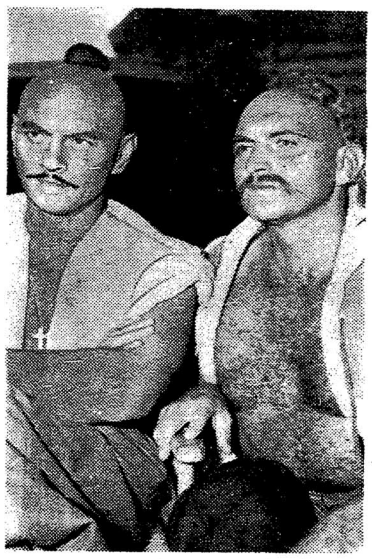
YUL BRYNNER, whose shaved pate became a symbol of male glamour a decade ago, glued a braided hair-tail onto the back of his cranium last fall to play the role of a fierce Cossack chieftain in the movie "Taras Bulba."

Mr. Brynner was qualified by heredity for the role. He was born in Vladivostok, Russia, of a Russian mother and a half-Swiss, half-Russian father.

The setting for the story was the Ukraine, but in line with a time-honored Hollywood policy, United Artists chose to do the filming on the Argentine pampas bordering the towering Andes mountains.

By a stroke of luck, filming was just getting under way when a husky Nebraskan with a Slavic heritage, Danny Liska of Niobrara, hove into view on the Argentine plains.

Mr. Liska, known variously as a wandering adventurer, philosopher, diplomat-on-a-motorcycle, writer,



Yul Brynner (left) poses with Danny Liska of Niobrara, Neb., his look-alike action double for the movie "Taras Bulba."

photographer and somewhat of a linguist, had just completed a precarious jaunt from Nebraska by way of the jungles of Guatemala, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

The Nebraskan was signed on as an extra, and proved his value almost immediately by becoming a sort of interpreter between the Hollywood crowd and the Spanish-speaking gauchos.

And then with his Nebraska-style horsemanship he beat out the storied gauchos for the job of being Mr. Brynner's double in the movie.

The film's big spectacle offers a battle for a city in the Ukraine held by Poland during the Sixteenth Century. The lavish sequence involves more than seven thousand actors and five thousand horses.

For four thousand years, Aryans, Scythians, Bulgars, Tartars and the Golden Horse had invaded, fought over and ultimately lost the Ukraine, a land of rolling steppes gouged deep by rivers.

Finally in the Sixteenth Century, when a Turkish army overwhelmed a Polish army, hundreds of native Cossacks suddenly rode into the fray, driving the Turks over a sheer cliff and out of Ukrainian history forever.

Russian-born Yul Brynner, played the title role of Taras Bulba, fierce Sixteenth Century Cossack chieftain, in the forthcoming movie, "Taras Bulba," which was filmed on the plains of Argentina.

As the action double for Mr. Brynner in his role of Taras Bulba, Mr. Liska did battle scenes and the dangerous riding parts.

"It was a job that took lots of guts or ignorance," he remarked later. "I was able to eliminate intelligence from my mind."

For this, said Mr. Liska, the Hollywood people offered him the same as the gaucho extras were getting. This Mr. Liska disdained, and a hassle ensued over a wage adjustment for his stunt-type role as a Brynner double.

By the time filming was completed, all that Mr. Liska had lost was his hair. He looked surprisingly like the veteran movie and stage actor, and he has kept a shaven pate since his return to Nebraska.

Mr. Brynner had his hair removed back in 1951 when he starred in the Brodaway hit musical, "The King and I."

He is a man with an international viewpoint, and in this respect he and Mr. Liska are also alike. Three years ago, Mr. Brynner took on the unsalaried job as special consultant to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. After visiting many camps for displaced persons in Europe and the Middle East, he came back with a TV documentary, "Rescue—With Yul Brynner," and a book, "Bring Forth the Children."

Mr. Liska came home from his travels with a love and respect for the people of many lands and a strong belief in the need for better understanding between nations.

He has been elaborating on this theme since his return in lectures to groups in Nebraska.

The film in which Messrs Brynner and Liska appear, scheduled for winter release, also stars Christine Kaufmann, Brad Dexter, Preey Lopez, Ilka Windish and Sam Wanamaker.

1962-09-09 Yul, Dan Teamed in Film, Omaha World Herald

Wandering Boy Dan Liska to Travel on 2 Continents

The World-Herald's News Service.

Niobrara, Neb.—Danny Liska, Nebraska's adventuresome wandering boy, has itching feet again.

The Knox County rancher and his wife Arlene left Friday for Chicago, Ill., to set the stage for another double-continent - spanning trip by motorcycle.

They are to pick up a pennant being presented them by the Adventurer's Club.

They hope to fly the flag on their motorcycle later this year on a jaunt which they plan to start at Cape Town, Africa, and end at the North Cape of Norway.

Danny has already motorcycled from the tip of Alaska to the tip of South America.

His exploits, ranging from a trial by jungle headhunters to being a stand-in for Yul Brynner in the current movie, "Taras Bulba," on location in the Argentine, were chronicled in The Omaha World-Herald and its Magazine of the Midlands.

Since his return from South America last year he has been giving slide lectures through Nebraska.

1963-01-25 Wandering Boy Dan Liska to Travel on 2 Continents, Omaha World Herald

Feb. 28, 1963

Mr. and Mrs. Danny Liska left for Phoenix, Arizona Monday. They will fly to the southern tip of Argentina where Mr. Liska will rebuild the motorcycle he left there before he and his wife leave for Africa and another long trip.

1963-02-28 Arlene and Danny fly to Argentina to Rebuild BMW, Niobara Tribune

9-5-1963

Danny Liska Leaves On Europe-Africa Trip

Mr. and Mrs. Danny Liska have recently returned from Brazil, bringing with them their battered remains of a 1958 BMW R60 motorcycle, that carried them thru every country on the North and South American Continent.

Danny is off again in search of new horizons and adventures- flying last week from New York to Hamburg, Germany - arriving there he equipped a new B M W for an adventure that will take Danny from point North North Cape, Norway southward through Europe and Africa to the southern most tip of Africa.

Of all the many different adventures on this hemisphere as the tundra, the jagged Andes, crossing the Atacams desert, and the mighty massive Amazon with all of its mystey, Danny says nothing he has seen over South America looks like this at Europe, its so different, so intensely farmed yet always so many forests.

Danny has started northward and already it has been raining quite a bit.

1963-09-05 Danny Liska Leaves on Europe-Africa Trip, Niobrara Tribune

1963-09-15 Danny looks out at the Barents Sea from Nordkapp, 1000 km north of the Arctic Circle

BRARA, NEBRASKA 68760 THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1963 Niobrara Tribune Single Copy 5¢

Fauske And Arctic Circle Norway

Motorcycling Adventurer Danny Liska starts on another trip from Norway to Africa

The lure of motorcycling adventure once again has called Danny Liska to the Adventure Trail.

The Niobrara rancher flew to Hamburg, Germany the latter part of August where he equipped a BMW R-60 Motorcycle for this adventure - - Liska's goal is to journey with his motorcycle from Northernmost cape of Norway, then travel southward through Europe; to Africa across the Sahara Dessert into equatorial Africa and eventually to the southernmost Cape of Africa.

Here in Norway leaving the valleys of the picturesque countryside with its birch trees changing color climbing up, up to the end of timberline into the multicolored tundra and snow clad mountains, and here the Railroad that follows alongside has lots of snow shed- and snowfences and with the cold-wind-rain -sleet and desolation- a fitting scene for the marker -P O LA R CIR-CLE; pictured above. Traveling on for 700 miles farther north to the end of the continent north - only the sea beeond - the northernmost tip of North Cape. Arriving there the end of September and now Danny is headed south.

Danny and his wife Arlene returned last summer from Brazil with the battered remains of a 1958 BMW R 60 that carried the Liskas for 62,000 miles through every country on the North and South American Continent.

1963-11-28 Danny Liska Starts on Another Trip from Norway to Africa, Niobrara Tribune

1964 Danny waits out a border crossing

1964 Egypt, Abu Simbel, Arlene

1964 Egypt, Giza, Danny and Arlene

1964 Libya, Danny with Nomadic Family

1964 Sahara Campsite at Sunset, Arlene

1964 South Africa, Tropic of Capricorn, Arlene

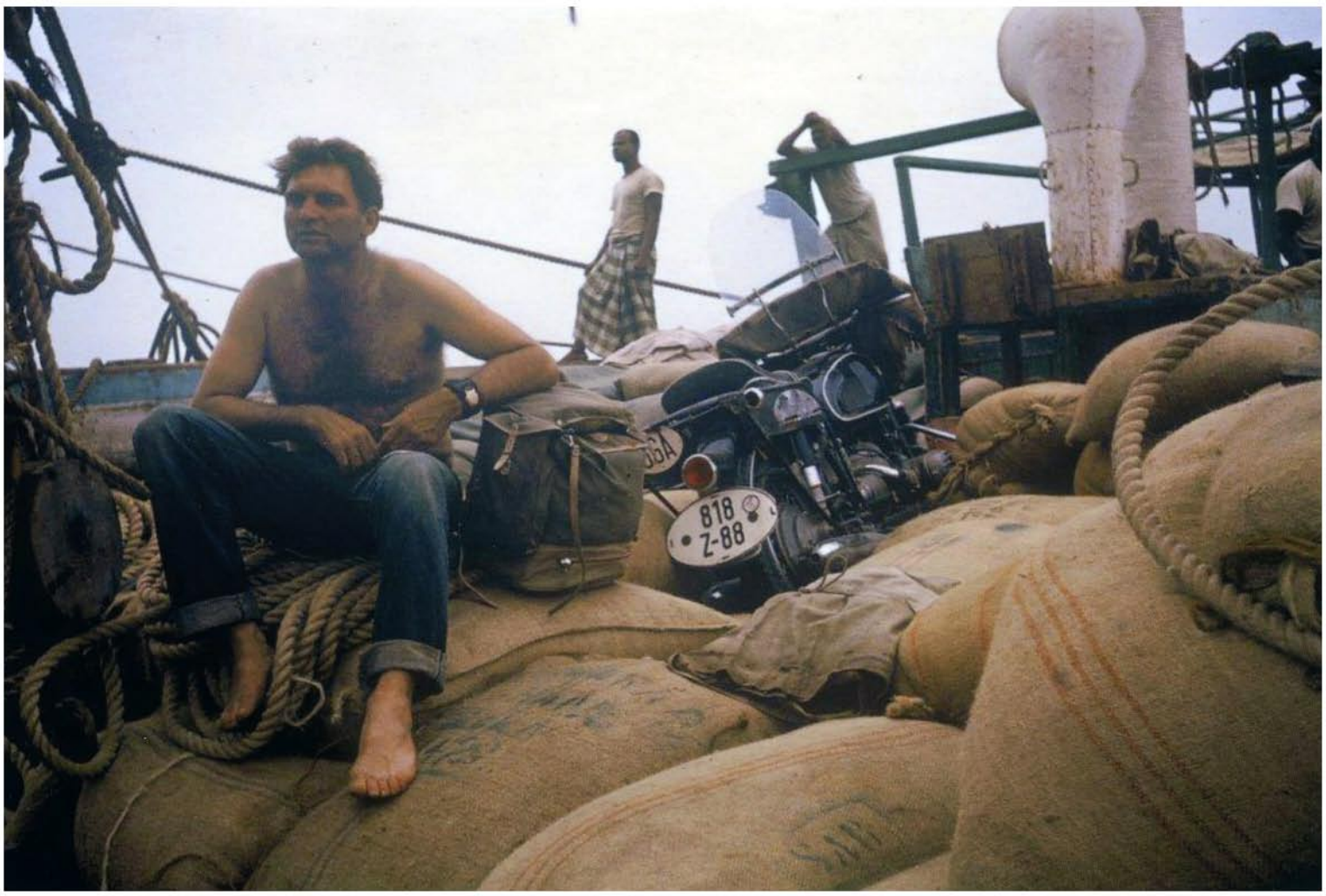
1964 Sudan, Danny

1964 Tanganyika Border, Danny

1964 Tanganyika, Arlene

1964 Tunisia at Ksar Ouled Soltane, Arlene

1964 Uganda, Equator, Arlene on BMW



1964 Yemen, Arabian dhow across Red Sea, Danny

1964 Yemen, Arabian dhow across Red Sea, Arlene

1964 Yemen, European Students at Port of Aden with Arlene

* * *

The Liskas

Moise Tshombe again is a primary figure of interest in Africa, and news from that region is hot as the premier-designate attempts to form a cabinet for a peaceful Congo of "national reconciliation."

And with an uncanny sense of timing, Nebraska's roving adventurer, Danny Liska of Niobrara, once more turns up in an area where worldwide news is developing.

Danny and his wife, Arlene, in their last communique to The World-Herald, were at Aden. They arrived there after crossing to Africa at Gibraltar, then proceeding across North Africa to Egypt, thence to the Sudan, Uganda "and the animal country," Tanganyika, Kenya and Ethiopia.

The Liskas took an Arabian dhow across the water to "the mud skyscraper City of Aden," and are now headed for Nairobi.

Danny, who has written stories for the Magazine of the Midlands on his travels from Alaska to the tip of South America, will have another in the magazine soon, on their adventures in Central America.

* * *

1964-07-11 Liskas in Yemen, Omaha World Herald

Liskas Ending Year Trip

Mr. and Mrs. Danny Liska, Niobrara, well known adventurers to Plainview people, sent word this week that they are hoping to wrap up their present travels soon and be back home.

The letter written on the boat on the way from Chisimioo, Somola, to Mobasa, on July 27, says;

"Greetings to all.

"We have just arrived at Mombasa Kenya, after having come overland through Somalia.

"It's been about a year now since we've been home and have been thinking of all the folks stateside. We want to get this journey wrapped up and back soon.

"By far the most interesting part of North Africa, then East Africa, was going up from Kenya through the N.F.D. into Ethiopa. Lots of "Shifta" trouble over their border dispute. Then the most of North Africa has "Shifta" trouble, but they go mostly for robbing.

"From Asseb, Eth., we took a ride on an Arabian Dhou to Aden and then went 600 miles into the hadhramout, South Arabia. Saw the skyscraper and mud city of Shibany. Was close to the Yemin border. It's about 120 degrees there in the shade — only no shade.

"The motorcycle still works good.

"The Africans give us a bit of a problem in that they don't want their photos taken, but you know Danny. He gets some pretty good shots anyway.

Danny and Arlene"

1964-08-05 Liskas Ending Mid Trip, Mombasa, Kenya

Nebraskans Find Darkest Africa Crawling With Chinese

Johannesburg, South Africa (AP) — "We don't go around the world—we sort of go up and down," said American cattle rancher Danny Liska as he drew breath here after a 30-thousand-mile motorcycle trip with his wife Arlene.

The Liskas, from Niobrara, Neb., had traveled from the Norwegian Cape across Europe and down through Africa on their motorcycle, specially fitted to carry their gear. Arlene rides on the back of the saddle.

"I'm not happy about the future of the Black Africa we saw," said Danny. "I doubt if we could make the same trip again in a couple of years. East Africa is crawling with litle Chinese men. It won't be long before they spread their wings a little more."

Some of their African adventures as told by the Liskas:

They were arrested in Ruanda, on the Congo-Tanganyika border, for taking photographs in the street. "I screamed and shouted in the police station and just walked out," said Danny. "Lucikly they didn't come after me."

They had a ringside seat at a clash between warring tribesmen in Kenya's northern frontier district. After two tribesmen had been killed and mutilated, the killers asked Danny and Arlene if they could share their campfire. "We didn't sleep much that night," Arlene said.

They were chased by a mob in Ethiopia after they had unwittingly tried to take photographs of a gorilla which had been killed for a special feast.

They passed through burning villages in the Lumpa tribal area of Northern Rhodesia, where African prophetess Alice Lenshina's warrior followers had clashed with Government security forces. Official communiques had reported hundreds killed. "You can take the official figure of dead there and multiply by five and you'd be right," Danny said.

"It's more exciting than being just a housewife," Arlene summed up.

—World-Herald Photo.

The Liskas . . . travel by motorcycle.

The Liskas periodically write about their adventures for The World-Herald Magazine of the Midlands. The next will appear November 8.

* * *

Liskas Through Africa

A press dispatch from Johannesburg, South Africa, yesterday brought cheerful news. Friends Danny and Arlene Liska have arrived there safely after a harrowing trip through that turbulent continent.

The last correspondence I had from the Liskas was word that they hoped to join a French caravan starting through the desert. Danny had difficulty in Europe getting his motorbike in shape for the trip.

Danny previously made motorbike trips, by himself, to a point beyond the northernmost road in Alaska and to the tip of South America.

The Niobrara (Neb.) rancher and his wife had some narrow escapes in Africa and I'm looking forward to a detailed report which I know Danny will provide the Magazine of the Midlands soon.

—Irving Baker.

Omaha World-Herald

WORLD PUBLISHING CO., OWNER & PUBLISHER
World-Herald Square, Omaha, Neb.
The Associated Press is exclusively entitled to the use for reproduction of local news printed in this newspaper, as well as all AP dispatches.

Good Morning!

There is an old adage that you can't fight City Hall.

And, likewise, I am forced to admit today that I can't fight the fact that the Christmas shopping season already has us surrounded, with December not yet a day old.

This comes in spite of my determination to ignore the signs and manifestations that began to appear before Halloween, and to brush aside the flood of catalogs and brochures that have been arriving in the mail for weeks, suggesting gifts ranging from cheese to chemise.

Arlene, Danny

Two developments over the week end broke down my resolve, made yearly, to stretch the fall spirit as far as possible into December (and delay thoughts of Christmas shopping until later in the month, generally 4 p. m. on December 24).

The principal development was, of course, the blanket of snow and plummeting thermometer that jolted the Midlands out of its pleasant autumn reverie.

The other was the arrival of our first greeting card of the season — from the adventurous team of Arlene and Danny Liska of Niobrara, Neb.

* * *

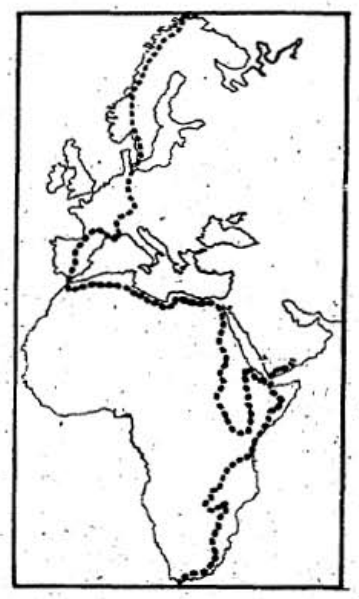
Jungle Grass

The Liskas' card was mailed while they were aboard the SS African Dawn, and bears the postage of the Republic of South Africa.

Where the Niobrara rancher and his wife are now is anybody's guess. They may be en route to Asia.

They have just finished a trip through Africa that started with the crossing at the Straits of Gibraltar and carried them along the Mediterranean coastal area to Egypt and then southward.

The greeting card has, in place of holly and pine cones, a border of jungle grass and figures of elephants, giraffes, alligators, monkeys and lions.



On one side is a photo, reproduced here, of the Liskas in traveling garb on the machine. On the other side is a map which shows the start of the trip from North Cape, Norway, September 15, 1963, and their course to South Cape, Africa, where the Liskas arrived October 28, 1964.

1964-12-01 Jungle Grass, Cape Agulhas, Omaha World Herald

Liskas Tell of 40,000-Mile Trip in Africa by Cycle, Boats

By Tom Allan

The uninvited dinner guests who became a main dish before the night was over.

A passel of rock-throwing Arabian youngsters pacified and delighted by a Czech drinking song.

The death of evil spirits at 50 miles an hour.

Fear of becoming a member of a sultan's harem.

A hundred nights of mystery and beauty punctuated by blood-curdling cries and sounds.

All these and many more are the thoughts and experiences brought home this week along with 11 thousand color slides by Danny and Arlene Liska, the Niobrara couple with itchy feet and adventure in their souls.

Ended is their incredible 15-month, 40-thousand-mile journey by motorcycle, land rover and river boat from North Cape, the northernmost tip of Norway, to South Cape, the southernmost extremity of Africa.

Last week's foot-deep snow in Chicago prevented the couple from arriving in Omaha in the style to which they have been accustomed—atop their baggage-laden motorcycle.

Instead they chugged into Omaha in a cloud of steam and smoke in a 1947 pickup truck purchased for the final homeward-bound leg. They expect to arrive at their Niobrara ranch today.

They'll spend the next few days cataloging their slides for a winter of lecturing and writing on their experiences. Some of the stories will appear in The World-Herald's Magazine of the Midlands.

If Arlene double-checks her dinner guest list, it will be understandable. She's happy to be alive after one uninvited guest incident in the trackless southern area of Ethiopia where trophy-seeking tribes make death one of Africa's cheapest commodities.

She'd been unnerved earlier in the day when a truck just ahead of their motorcycle ran over a cobra in the grass. The snake lashed at the truck and then, still writhing wildly, blocked their path, its huge hooded head ominously seeking another victim. But they escaped.

* * *

Seven-Footer

That night as Arlene finished supper over their campfire the uninvited guests arrived.

"I thought the noise was the Ethiopian driver of the truck we had been following and I called him over to get something to eat," Arlene said.

She looked up to find two naked seven-foot, bushy-haired, spear-carrying tribesmen close by. Frightened, she started working industriously. One stooped and with his bare hand stirred up the hot ashes and motioned he wanted something to eat.

Arlene visits Masai in Tanganyika . . . . Other tribesmen became an entree in Ethiopia.

"Our supplies were limited," Danny said.

Attempting to calm Arlene, he joshed her with:

"You invited them. How are you going to get rid of them?"

A moment later there were blood-curdling screams Danny says he will always remember as the "voice of Africa." Rushing toward them in the dim firelight came three warriors, spears outthrust.

* * *

'Awful'

They were rival tribesmen after the first two supper "guests."

"They caught them a few feet away in the thorny bush," Danny said. "It sounded like a giant alley cat fight. Arlene dashed for the truck and locked herself in."

Moments later just two tribesmen emerged, talked a moment with the Ethiopian truck driver and went away.

"The driver pointed to our motorcycle helmets and told them we were police from the capital at Addis Abbaba and would turn them in if they didn't leave," Arlene said.

"The rest of the night we lay in our sleeping bags listening to the hyenas eating our uninvited guests. It was pretty awful."

It is this intertribal savagery that leads Danny to believe that "it is almost impossible to understand Africa."

The Liskas were not a bit surprised at Tuesday's news bulletins of the riots and killings in the Sudan between the Arab Moslems of the north and the Negro tribesmen in the south.

"It was inevitable," Danny said. "We saw it coming when we were there.

"We forget that you can't judge some of the African nations by our standards. To me, Africa is a man walking to town carrying his shoes around his neck. They are a status symbol. When he arrives he puts them on. When he leaves he takes them off and reverts to the primitive. He applies the white man's culture only when it's to his benefit."

—Photos by Danny Liska.

Danny and Arlene . . . 40 thousand miles of adventure.

* * *

Haunted

The Liskas, who many times rode with the threat of death and danger in rebel country and sometimes through recently ravaged villages, said "strength is the one thing universally respected" by the savage tribes.

"To them kindness or generosity is a sign of weakness. But they respect the strong. Why is it that they kill the women and children and the men like missionaries and doctors who have attempted to be the kindest to them? Many are afraid that if they kill a strong man, his spirit will live to kill them. What some tribes do to bodies of their victims is horrible and incomprehensible to us. But our standards do not apply. To them the grisly trophies are a mark of honor, an emblem to be worn by a woman of their choice with pride."

The Liskas credit their safe journey to the fact they were unarmed, rode a strange vehicle, that Arlene—wearing coveralls and a helmet—was mistaken for a man, and that they traveled at unexpected times and on little traveled routes.

"I'm sure if we had a gun it would have been different," Danny said. "Also, if we had something they wanted. By the 'bush telegraph' they knew all we had was our cameras."

* * *

Theory

They also had their wits and Danny's incredible gall. He proved his strength-versus-weakness theory in the face of an angry crowd around a water hole in Uganda on the Congolese border.

"They became angry at Danny taking pictures," Arlene said. "I told him to be careful but he kept on taking pictures. Suddenly three tribesmen brandishing clubs rushed him. I thought this was it."

Husky, 220-pound Danny dropped his camera.

"It was just one of those things that comes to mind in a time like that," he said. "Before I knew it I was charging them brandishing my fists and shouting. They stopped and walked away. We got out of there fast."

Knowledge of their native Czech halted a stone-throwing barrage in Shibam in Southern Arabia.

"This is Moslem territory and we were obviously Christian infidels despoiling their soil," Danny said. "The youngsters followed us throwing rocks as we walked the streets. Pleas to elders and police did no good. Once during a barrage I turned and shouted, 'Hey kids, let's sing' and Arlene and I started singing "Pivo, Pivo, Pivo Cerveny," or "Red Beer," an old Czech drinking song.

"All kids like music and in a moment the street was full of dancing Arab kids singing and dancing like crazy."

Arlene added:

"Late that night we could hear the echo down the deserted streets, 'Pivo, Pivo'; maybe we started something."

* * *

No Sale

She admits one of her greatest concerns was during a visit with a sultan. Danny, a rancher, had become intrigued by how many cows a woman brought on the market.

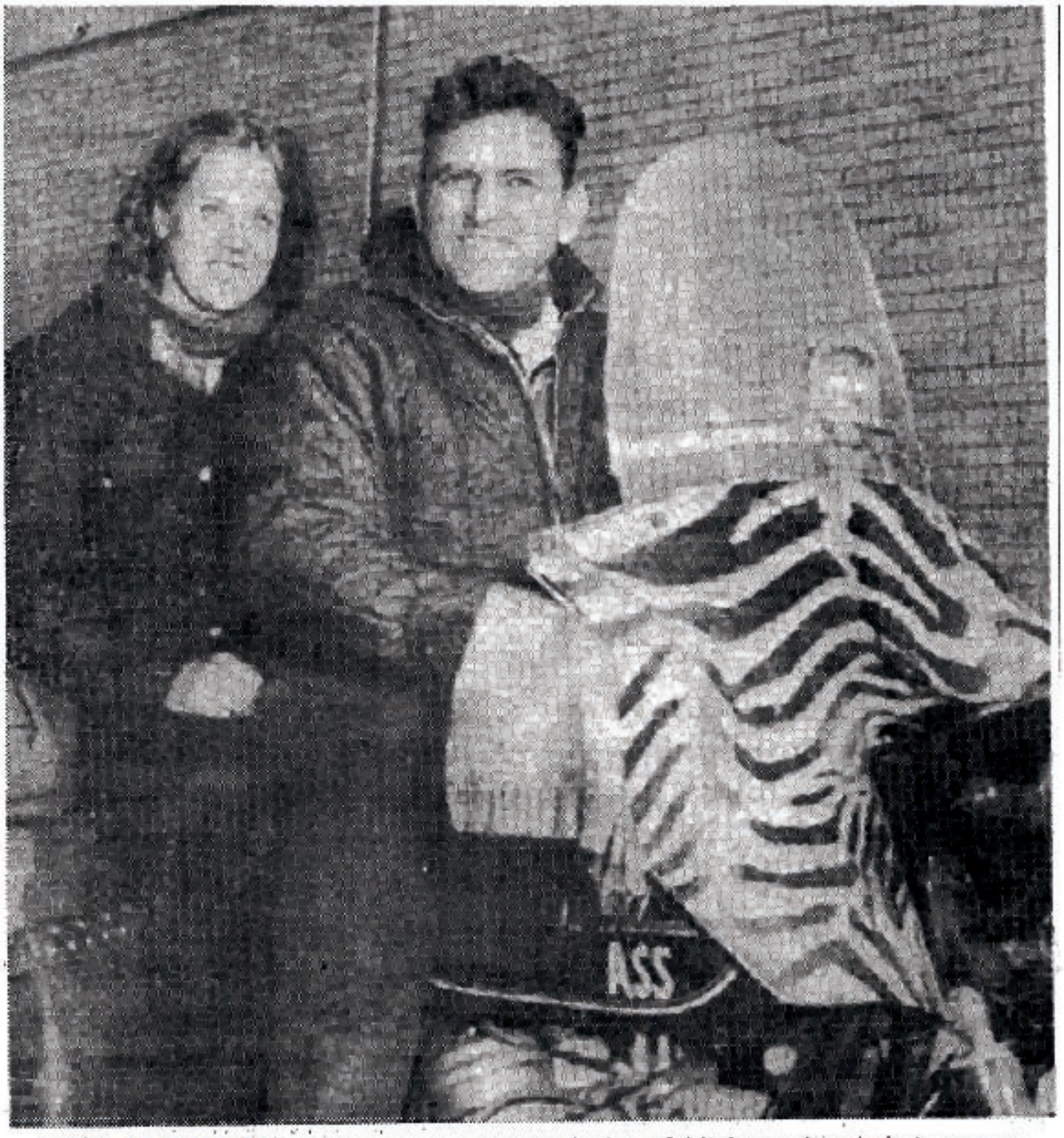
"He'd been kidding me that he was waiting for a good offer, but at the Sultan's I was scared he hadn't been kidding," she said. "I guess I wasn't fat enough to bring a good price."

Journeying home through busy American traffic, Danny is reminded about all the evil spirits he helped "kill" for African tribesmen.

"They'd wait till we were just about on them and then dash across in front of the motorcycle," he said. "I thought they were crazy till I asked. They were merely trying to kill the evil spirits they felt were tagging their coat or loincloth tails. After that I helped them. I'd hit the gas tank with my fist and scream when they dashed in front of me. I'd look back and they'd be beaming with relief and happiness.

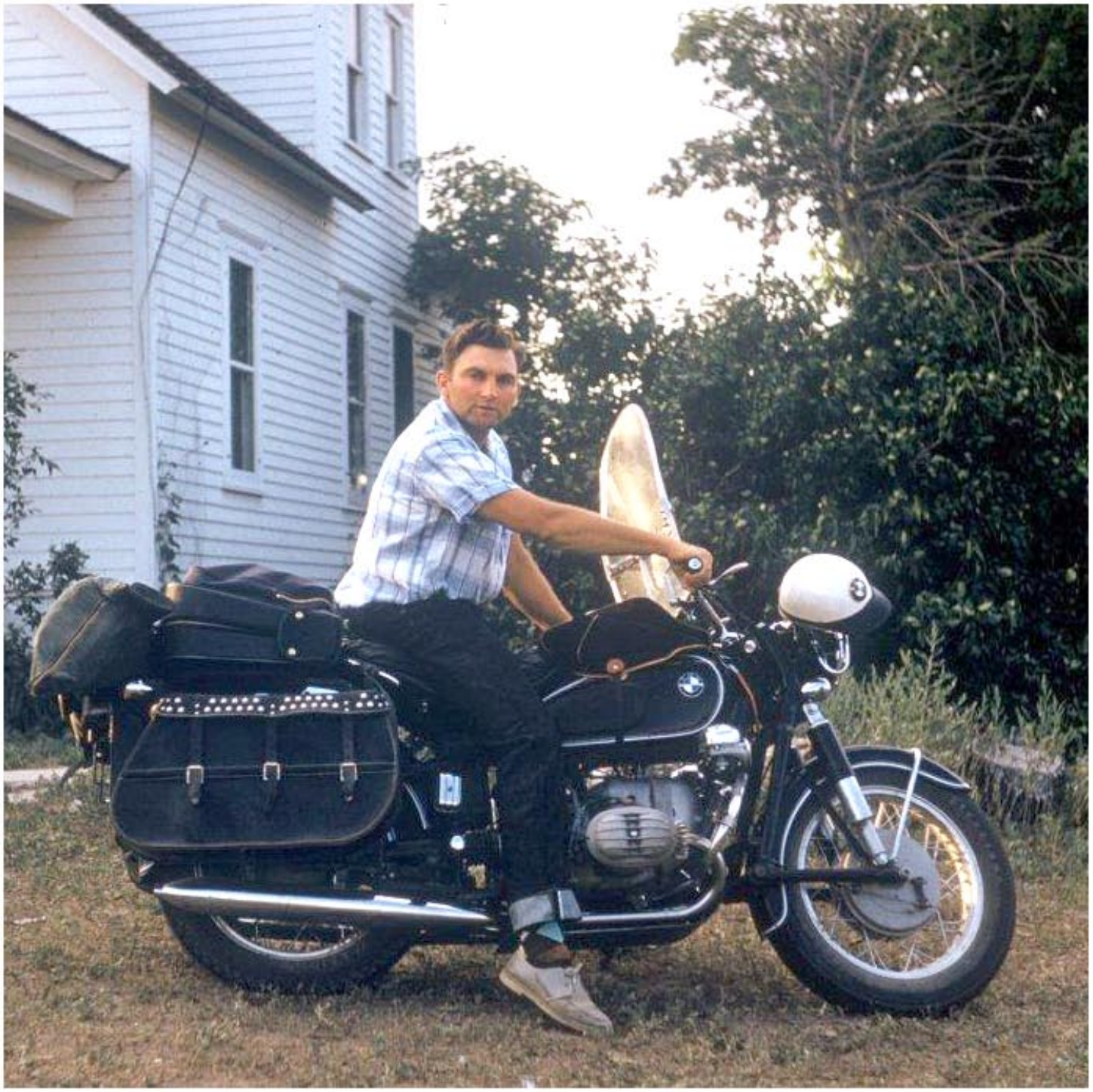
"Now since I'm back I'm wondering if some of these American drivers and pedestrians also have evil spirits on their coattails."

1964-12-09 Liskas Tell of 40000 Mile Trip In Africa, in Omaha, Omaha World Herald



HEAD FOR HOME — Danny and Arlene Liska of Niobrara head their motorcycle homeward after a brief stop in Norfolk Wednesday, following a 40,000-mile journey through Europe and Africa. (Story and pictures on Page 3).

1964-12-09 Liskas Tell of 40000 Mile Trip In Africa, in Omaha, Photo, Omaha World Herald



1965 Danny and the BMW at Niobrara

On the Sahara—

Bargains at the Camel Bazaar!

First of a new series of African adventures

By
Danny and
Arlene Liska

—Photos by the Authors.

The camel, like the horse, reveals a lot through his teeth.

El Djem, Tunisia.

LIFE in the Sahara can become monotonous . . . if you let it. The North African desert Arab doesn't. Perpetual tribal feuds, week-long wedding celebrations, camel races, pilgrimages to Mecca, an occasional public execution or raid on a passing camel caravan, a bit of smuggling and gun-running all lend that extra bit of spice to desert life.

Camel trading can be a lot of fun, too.

Arlene and I had put in a long day in the saddle of our motorcycle in riding south from Tunis to the desert village of El Djem where once a week the largest camel auctions of North Africa are held.

We arrived blue with cold and soaked from the rain we had encountered in the desert. Twice we almost lost the cycle and equipment while fording flooding gullies.

What made us most miserable though, was whenever we stopped at a village no one would sell us food. It was Ramadam, the Holy month when the faithful Muslim takes neither food nor water during the daylight hours, not even daring to swallow their own saliva lest Allah be angered.

Muslims take their religion seriously; backsliders are not tolerated. We encountered one Libyan whose hand had been cut off at the wrist by his neighbors who caught him sneaking a drink of water at midday.

o o o

WE WERE unloading our gear and carrying it into the only hotel in El Djem when some one fired a rifle signaling that darkness had officially arrived. We forgot about unpacking and galloped over to the village eating house.

Darkness brought life to the village. The unlit streets were thronged with desert people arriving for the coming day's auction. Bronzed Bedouins shouted and clubbed their bull camels ahead of them. Libyans wearing saucy Fez caps were arriving from Seba with their herds of animals.

There were a few tall Touregs, the mysteriously veiled blue men of the desert, driving their prized white camels. One caravan of Berbers had come all of the way from Morocco. The blue eyes and blond hair of these men of the Atlas Mountains reveal their European ancestry.

In early morning we awakened with a start. From outside our open window came the din of Arabic shouting and screaming and the roaring of camels.

o o o

THERE were at least a couple of hundred camels and I don't know how many Arabs. The men gathered together in various groups of about six to 12 in each. Every one was faced to the middle like a football huddle.

The similarity ended there. The Arabs were all shouting or screaming at once, waving their arms in wild gestures or flailing the air with walking canes.

Near each group stood a camel, obviously the object of the controversy. Oblivious to the bedlam the camel munched away at his cud with an aloof, almost haughty, expression on his face.

I moved up to one group. Every one was so excited that no one noticed me. I figured that the Arab doing the most shouting was the camel's owner. This seemed confirmed when he suddenly grabbed the camel's halter rope and cracked the beast across the shins with his cane, whereupon the camel knelt to the ground.

The owner then stepped back and thumped the camel's hump significantly. I had learned that a camel's physical condition is best evidenced in the hump, the fatter the hump the more healthy the animal.

The camel quit chewing his cud and began roaring hoarsely. Next, the owner grabbed the camel's upper and lower lips, pulling them apart to reveal the teeth. Other owners sometimes avoided doing this, obviously trying to conceal the fact that their animals' teeth were worn short.

o o o

THE initial half-hour of arguing never brought forth a price at all but dwelt upon the animal's quality, training and age with the owner extolling its virtues and the buyers and onlookers pooh-poohing his claims.

When finally some one made an offer, which was about 25 per cent of what the owner asked, things really got interesting. It seemed incredulous that an argument could reach so fervent a pitch without violence taking place.

Suddenly the owner flung both hands into the air and declared that the price bid was the vilest of insults and he could no longer endure such abuse. He grabbed the camel's halter rope and stomped off in a magnificent show of hurt pride. Invariably his exit was made a circle which ended back in the group again with the argument renewed with even greater fervor.

One Arab moved from group to group and intervened as referee whenever buyer and seller came to a deadlock. Once things were ironed out he moved on to see where else his services were needed.

He was trying to sort out a dispute in our group when trouble broke out in the bunch nearest us. The seller had guaranteed his camel was gentle, but when a prospective buyer tried to feel its hump the camel bit him on the backside.

The animal clenched his teeth and held fast while the Arab howled with pain. The others, including the seller, howled with delight. Some one finally pried the camel's jaws apart with his cane.

Being released did not improve the victim's humor and he grabbed the seller by either side of the collar in a cross-handed kind of scissor hold, pulling the collar tight against the throat. The seller's laughter faded and his face had turned a bluish purple color before the referee stepped in and broke it up.

o o o

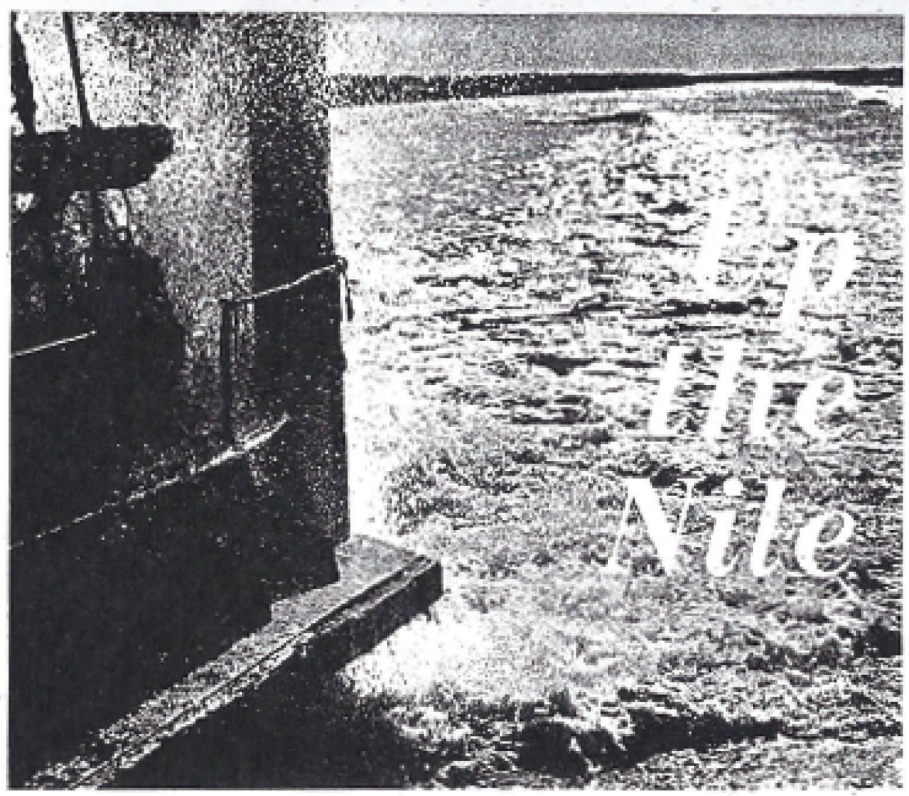
WITHIN a short time bartering began anew. I noted that, strangely enough, the recently bitten Arab bought the camel.

The Saharan Arab does not usually take kindly to strangers with camera. I was having trouble getting the pictures I wanted until Arlene finally broke the ice.

She was watching a sale when a seller, to prove the gentleness of his animal, insisted on her sitting on the camel as it knelt. She did. Then the animal stood up. This action has to be seen to be appreciated. The camel's back lurches suddenly forward as he gets to his rear feet and pitches sharply backwards as he rises to his front legs.

Arlene squealed with fright and the Arabs cheered like cowboys at a rodeo. Other sellers, noting the asset of Arlene's indorsement, insisted on her sitting on each one's camel. This went on all day, and I finally got my pictures.

1965-04-25 Bargains at the Camel Bazaar by Danny and Arlene Liska, Omaha World Herald



Photos & Story by Danny Liska

DANNY and Arlene Liska of Niobrara, Neb., recently completed a perilous journey across Africa from the Mediterranean Sea to the Cape of Good Hope. This is another in their series of adventure stories written exclusively for the Magazine of the Midlands.

THE Dinka like to prove their manhood by spearing elephants, stealing cattle and hunting lions. For entertainment they play with their cattle or raid neighboring tribes. When it comes to food, their greatest delicacy is fresh cows' blood mixed with milk.

A Dinka hates work and detests clothes. Nor does he care for the Moslem religion, Arabic language or Arab people.

Recently some of these southern Sudanese black tribesmen killed a Sudanese Arab officer and emasculated him. When his body was discovered, the Army garrison at Juba went berserk, set fire to the native homes and butchered the occupants as they fled. News sources placed the death toll at 14 hundred. The actual figure may have been several times as much.

o o o

BEFORE I went to Africa I knew little of the Sudan, but after traveling 25 hundred miles in it, I looked up some figures to find out just how large it is. The Sudan has nine times more people than Nebraska, is 12½ times larger than Nebraska and is one hell of a primitive country.

Never had I felt as uncomfortable as the 10 days my wife and I spent traveling up the Sudanese Nile on a paddle-wheeled steamer. By uncomfortable, I don't refer to the swarms of hungry mosquitoes or the hot, sticky deck plates on which we slept at night, or the dirty river water we drank and the slop that we ate for food.

After several months in Africa you get used to things like that, but what kept us on pins and needles during the entire boat trip was the hostile atmosphere that hung like a pall over our fellow passengers.

On this same boat were some six hundred naked or semi-naked black tribesmen armed with spears. They outnumbered by five to one the Arab soldiers who patrolled the overcrowded decks, shoving their way through the blacks with the muzzles of their sub-machine guns.

o o o

AT KOSTI, I bought passage at the fourth class window, so during the entire trip we had to sleep and eat among the tribesmen . . . fourth class.

They were an interesting lot. Some had fantastic hairdos done up with cow's dung. All had their faces mutilated with tribal scars.

Once we learned the distinguishing marks it was easy to identify the tribes. There were the seven-foot-tall Nuer, Dinka and Shilluk, who for hours stood stork-like on one foot with the other leg cocked and toes braced above the knee of the supporting limb.

There were Latuka who had pulled out their top teeth so that they would resemble the cattle they adored. And there were a variety of other tribes — among them the shorter Bari with teeth filed to a point and the Azande who are said even today to occasionally practice cannibalism.

The Africans asked us to eat with them. We squatted around a pot of durra (a grain somewhat like milo), scooped it up with our fingers and squeezed it into balls before placing in the mouth. Surprise delicacies were small pieces of half-rotted meat thrown into the stew.

Although each African spoke his own tribal dialect, almost all of them knew some English. This is the legacy of 57 years of British rule and as many years of Christian mission work among these people. I was constantly amused by the heavy British accent of one naked seven-footer who spoke English impeccably.

I asked him what caused the hatred between the northern Arabs and the southern Blacks. "Blimey!" he exclaimed, "the Government wants us to speak in Arabic and take up this rot of bowing toward the east, becoming Moslems and all that sort of thing. Quite impossible!"

o o o

WHEN Sudan got its independence in 1956, the five million blacks living in the southern provinces couldn't have cared less. The British Colonial Government had never bothered them much, seldom interfered with tribal matters and had not insisted upon formal education.

It may have been a bit annoying when a district commissioner tried to limit the number of elephants that they could legally spear, but the fact that the British didn't permit Arabs in the southern provinces made up for that.

Although an Arab runs against the grain of an African Sudanese, "One Nation—One Language—One Religion" became the motto of the new Government. They sent forth teachers into the jungles and papyrus swamps of the southern provinces to teach the five million blacks the Arabic language and the Moslem religion.

They also sent along some soldiers. The southern blacks didn't go along with the idea and to emphasize their views killed a few soldiers.

Undiscouraged, the Government built a new railroad into the south, built schools, hospitals and airstrips. This only confirmed the blacks' suspicions that the Arabs were coming to exploit them so they killed some more soldiers. The dream of the "Greater Sudan" just wasn't materializing, and it was in this atmosphere of rebellion that Arlene and I headed south.

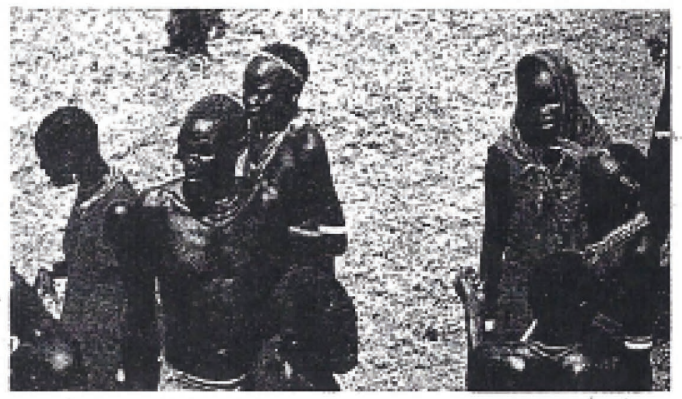
o o o

SUDANESE visas are hard to get and I had only gotten ours by lying to the Sudanese consul in Cairo that we wanted to visit an Arab friend in Khartoum. The visa was invalid south of the capital but we started southward anyway.

Two hundred miles later, at Kosti, the road was closed to all except military vehicles. Rather than turn back, we threw our motorcycle aboard a huge paddle-wheel river boat which was destined for Juba, 10 days farther south, up the Nile.

Hundreds of black tribesmen were climbing aboard and I sensed

1965-10-31 Up the Nile by Danny and Arlene Liska, Omaha World Herald-1



Upper left—Shillak tribesmen wears nipple-like tribal scars.
Upper right—Sudanese guard stands on barge up the River Nile.
Lower right—Dinka tribesmen watch the loading with interest.

that they were going back to their people to be there when the trouble began.

The boat was overloaded several times its capacity. Permanent passengers were some 75 uniformed Arab soldiers, who carried their sub-machine guns in readiness. There were another hundred Arabs on the first and second class barge, where we were not allowed, and about 25 plain-clothesed Arabs who mingled among the blacks. (I later saw them dressed in military uniforms.)

When I attempted to take one black's picture, an Arab officer put his hand over the camera lens. "It is forbidden to take pictures of our southern savages," he said. "We feel it is unfair of foreigners to show their people the primitive side of our nation. We wish to be regarded as a young country with pride and dignity."

o o o

I LATER had many visits with the officer and once he even invited Arlene and me to have dinner with him—first class. During our many hours of conversation he told of the profound problems undermining the unity of this young country.

Should the southern blacks secede and form their own independent nation, how could they succeed as a country with no agricultural or mineral wealth, destitute of cities and economy, in a jungle land with five million illiterate and primitive tribesmen?

They could, of course, if they continued to live the simple life they have always known — these noble-featured ebony giants who have never wanted or asked for anything other than to be left alone. But today who allows a savage to remain a savage?

During the entire river journey I expected the blacks would at any moment take up their spears against the soldiers. But the hatred, to my amazement, was held in check. The bloodletting never took place aboard. They waited until they got ashore before they began to kill each other.

A few days after our boat docked at Juba, 30 thousand Sudanese blacks fled into Uganda. The refugees were almost entirely women and children; the men had either been killed or had remained to avenge the slaughter.

o o o

THE trail that led from Juba to the Uganda border took us through several burned-out villages. Not a soul did we see. Once we passed by a flower garden, its blossoms a splash of color among the cinders that had been a Christian mission.

When I read later of the Arab officer whose mutilation led to the burning and slaughter of Juba, I hoped that it had not been the officer who told me, "We wish to be regarded as a young country with pride and dignity."

Although he undoubtedly learned that I had disregarded his warning and had taken some pictures, he shook our hands as we parted at Juba and said, "Alaikum as salaam;" ("On you be peace").

1965-10-31 Up the Nile by Danny and Arlene Liska, Omaha World Herald-2

In the African desert both the BMW and the camel offer dependable, quiet, economical transportation of amazing endurance. Arlene, my courageous wife, tried both.

She preferred the motorcycle.

From Danny Liska's diary of his wedding trip from the North Cape in Norway to the South Cape at the Southern tip of Africa – 40,000 miles on his BMW R 60.

SEE YOUR NEAREST AUTHORIZED BMW DEALER, OR FOR INFORMATION WRITE TO:
EAST: BUTLER & SMITH, INC., 160 WEST 83RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10024
WEST: FLANDERS COMPANY, 200 WEST WALNUT STREET, PASADENA, CALIF. 91103
CANADA: NORTHWEST MOTORS LTD., 2321 KEELE STREET, TORONTO 15, ONTARIO

27

1966 A BMW Wedding Trip Advertisement with Danny

On the Pan American Highway

Some day motorcycles and automobiles will zip over it : if and when it will be finished.

Because of its shaft drive the BMW carried us through the quagmires that some day will be a road from Alaska all the way to the Southern tip of South America.

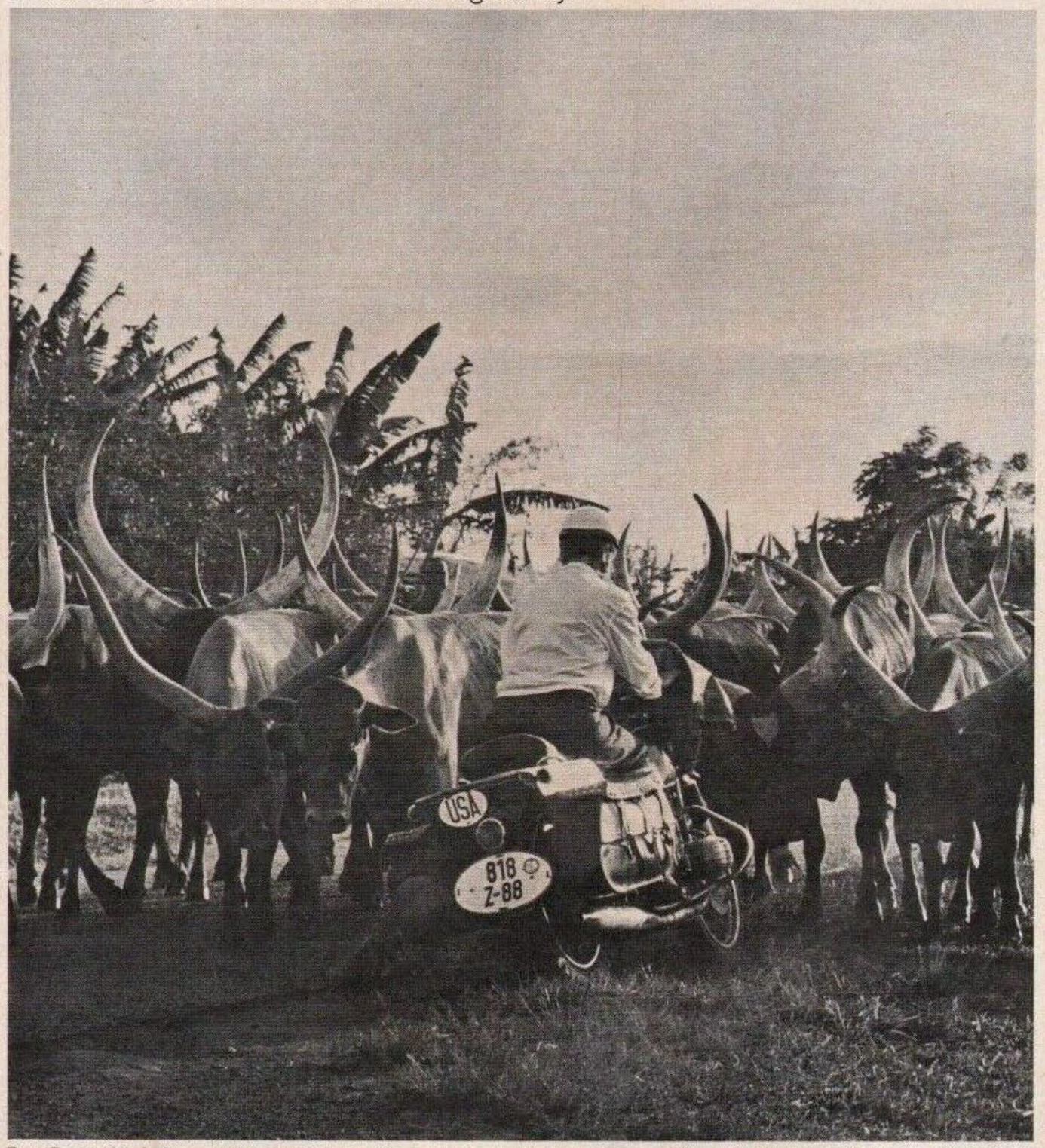
From Danny Liska's diary of his wedding trip from the North Cape in Norway to the South Cape at the Southern tip of Africa – 40,000 miles on his BMW R 60.

SEE YOUR NEAREST AUTHORIZED BMW DEALER, OR FOR INFORMATION WRITE TO:
EAST: BUTLER & SMITH, INC., 160 WEST 83RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10024
WEST: FLANDERS COMPANY, 200 WEST WALNUT STREET, PASADENA, CALIF. 91103
CANADA: NORTHWEST MOTORS LTD., 2321 KEELE STREET, TORONTO 15, ONTARIO

1966 B BMW Wedding Trip Advertisement

We had anticipated unusual road conditions, but this slow-moving wall of African handlebars was a surprise we had not expected.

There was only one thing to do. Wait. For even a BMW cannot overcome all obstacles–right away.



From Danny Liska's diary of his wedding trip from the North Cape in Norway to the South Cape at the Southern tip of Africa-40,000 miles on his BMW R 60.

SEE YOUR NEAREST AUTHORIZED BMW DEALER, OR FOR INFORMATION WRITE TO:
EAST: BUTLER & SMITH, INC., 160 WEST 83RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10024
WEST: FLANDERS COMPANY, 200 WEST WALNUT STREET, PASADENA, CALIF. 91103
CANADA: NORTHWEST MOTORS LTD., 2321 KEELE STREET, TORONTO 15, ONTARIO

1966 C BMW Wedding Trip Advertisement with Danny

"The holy month of fasting has ended, and now my tribe has prepared a feast. You *must* come and feast with us," insisted the Arab chieftain and his sons.

Such an invitation is a great honor and not to be denied. Of course, we accepted, and a grand feast it was.

The only way they let us repay them for their hospitality was a ride on our BMW. They had heard it was the world's best motorcycle and wanted to try it.

The chieftain, his sons and every man, woman, and child took their turn on the BMW.

It was a thrilling end of the feast.

From Danny Liska's diary of his wedding trip from the North Cape in Norway to the South Cape at the Southern tip of Africa – 40,000 miles on his BMW R 60.

SEE YOUR NEAREST AUTHORIZED BMW DEALER, OR FOR INFORMATION WRITE TO:
EAST: BUTLER & SMITH, INC., 160 WEST 83RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10024
WEST: FLANDERS COMPANY, 200 WEST WALNUT STREET, PASADENA, CALIF. 91103
CANADA: NORTHWEST MOTORS LTD., 2321 KEELE STREET, TORONTO 15, ONTARIO

1966 D BMW Wedding Trip Advertisement with Danny

Two people. One love.

First in a series of excerpts from the diary of Danny Liska, rancher, adventurer and inveterate motorcyclist.

Until we met, Arlene had never looked at a motorcycle. After reading the diary of my motorcycle trip from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, the southern tip of South America, she became interested.

I offered her a honeymoon trip on the dual seat of our BMW R 60 from Europe's North Cape, to South Africa's Cape of Good Hope.

Now, after our 15 months'—40,000 mile journey from the Arctic land of the midnight sun through civilized macadamed Europe and pathless deserts and jungles of Africa and Arabia, Arlene's confidence in both of us is unshakable.

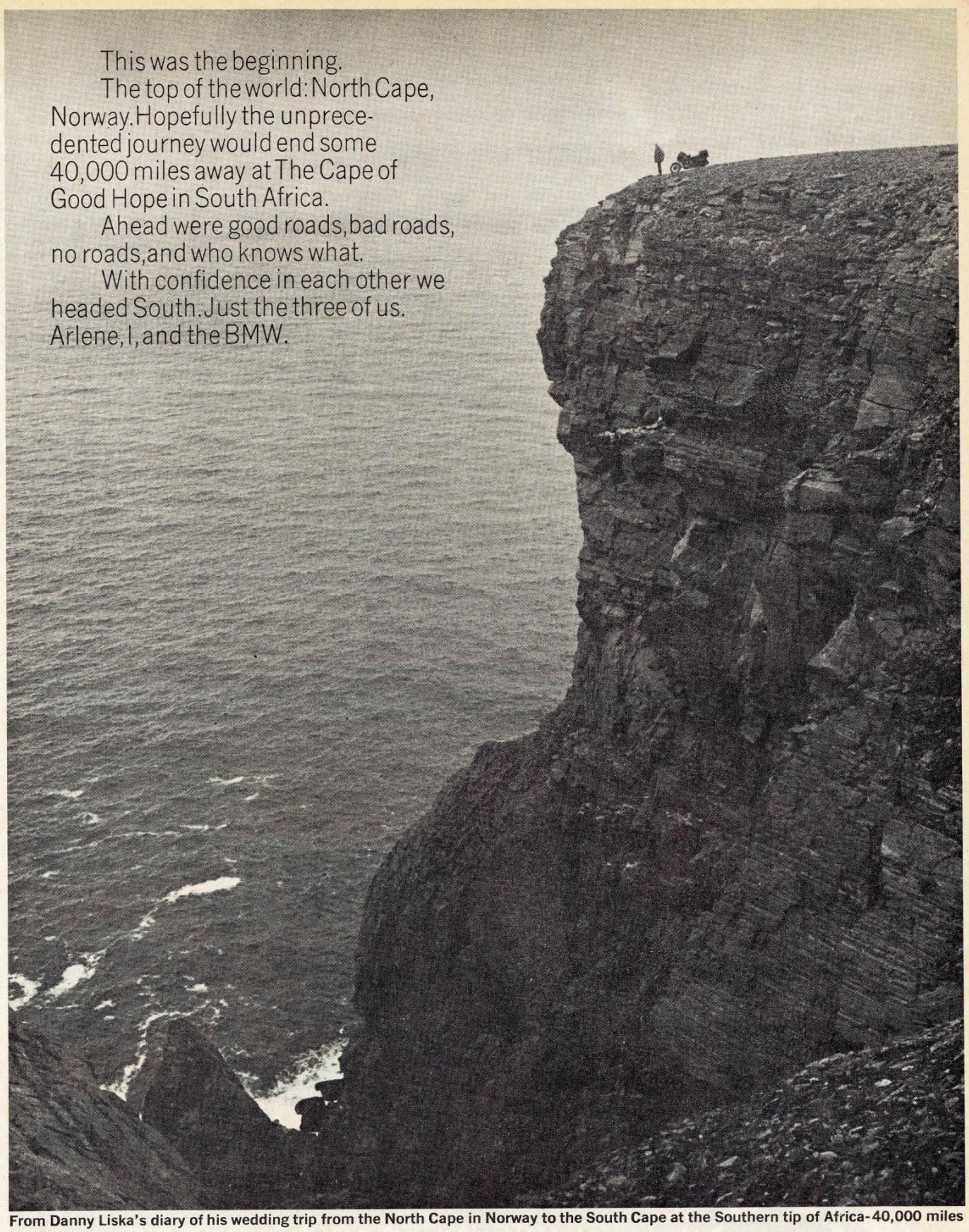
Yes, I was lucky in the choice of my bride and wise in selecting the BMW for both of these unprecedented trips.

Danny Liska

Danny Liska, Adventurer.

SEE YOUR NEAREST AUTHORIZED BMW DEALER, OR FOR INFORMATION WRITE TO:
EAST: BUTLER & SMITH, INC., 160 WEST 83RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10024
WEST: FLANDERS COMPANY, 200 WEST WALNUT STREET, PASADENA, CALIF. 91103
CANADA: NORTHWEST MOTORS LTD., 2321 KEELE STREET, TORONTO 15, ONTARIO

1966-02 BMW Wedding Trip Advertisement with Danny and Arlene



This was the beginning.

The top of the world: North Cape, Norway. Hopefully the unprecedented journey would end some 40,000 miles away at The Cape of Good Hope in South Africa.

Ahead were good roads, bad roads, no roads, and who knows what.

With confidence in each other we headed South. Just the three of us. Arlene, I, and the BMW.

From Danny Liska's diary of his wedding trip from the North Cape in Norway to the South Cape at the Southern tip of Africa - 40,000 miles on his BMW R 60.

SEE YOUR NEAREST AUTHORIZED BMW DEALER, OR FOR INFORMATION WRITE TO:
EAST: BUTLER & SMITH, INC., 160 WEST 83RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10024
WEST: FLANDERS COMPANY, 200 WEST WALNUT STREET, PASADENA, CALIF. 91103
CANADA: NORTHWEST MOTORS LTD., 2321 KEELE STREET, TORONTO 15, ONTARIO

1966-03 BMW Wedding Trip Advertisement with Danny

* * *

Pride of Prairie

The Midlands can be proud of one of its daughters. Arleen Liska of Niobrara appeared on the "To Tell the Truth" television program yesterday and conducted herself like the fine example of Cornhusker femininity that she is.

Arleen accompanied her husband, Danny, on a motorcycle tour from the top of Norway to the tip of Africa.

Arleen's demure appearance fooled the panel. Only one of the four members picked her. Those who voted against her found it hard to believe that her husky rancher husband, charming Arleen and a tent could travel together on a motorbike through Darkest Africa, as she told the panel they did.

If the panelists had delved a bit more into her background they would have seen how very credible the trip could be for the attractive Niobraran. She often has run the ranch alone when Danny has been gone on other trips. She can take care of the cattle and the many chores necessary where livestock is involved.

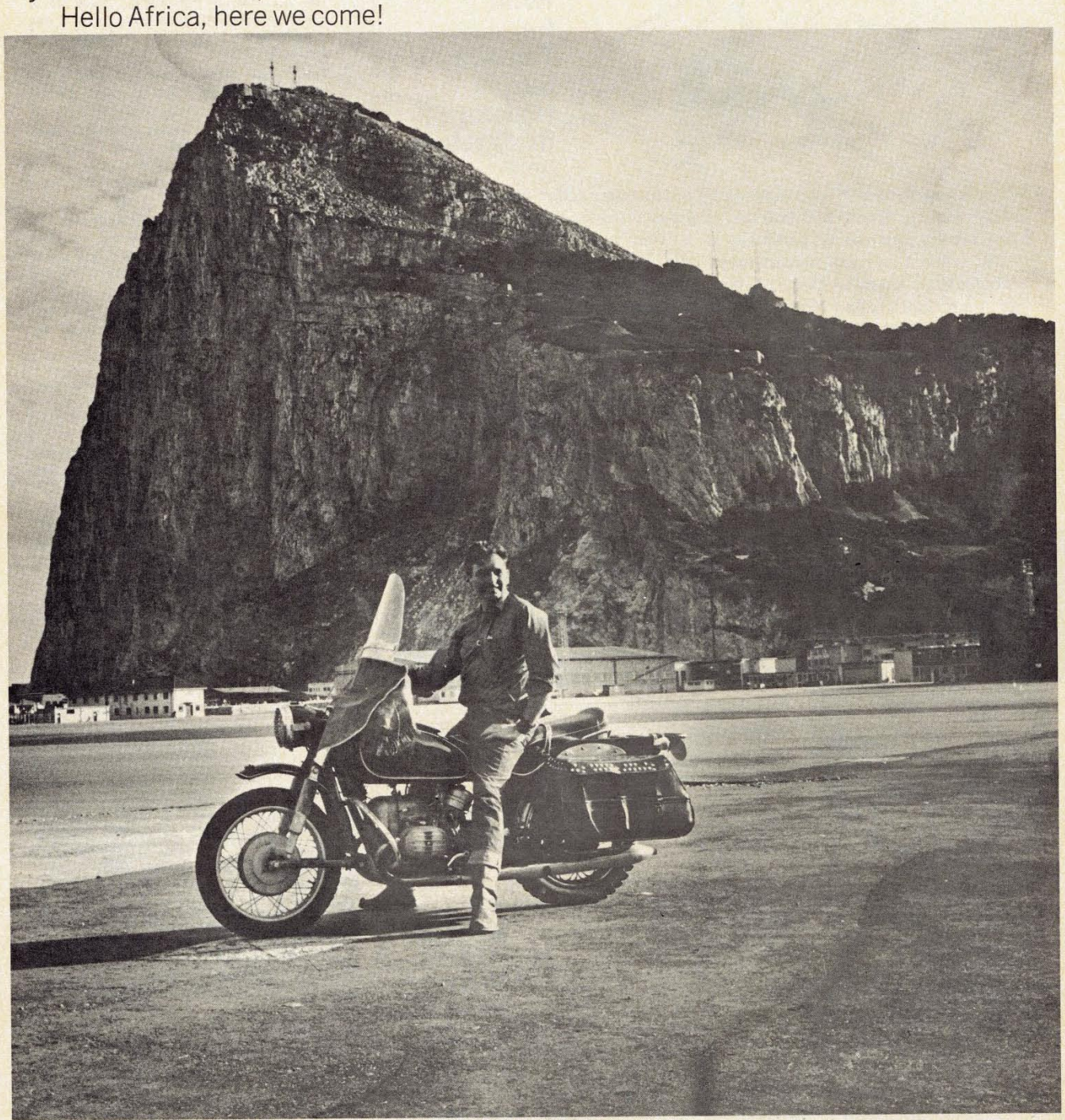
She is proof that the spirit of the pioneer women still lives in Nebraska. I'm sure the panel and the television audience caught some of that spirit.

* * *

Goodbye Europe—it was a breeze.

Across the Strait of Gibraltar lies Africa—the great challenge to man and machine. Deserts, mountains, jungles. Extreme heat and cold, violent rain and dust storms. Nature's severest proving ground where my trusted BMW will pass its most grueling tests.

Hello Africa, here we come!



From Danny Liska's diary of his wedding trip from the North Cape in Norway to the South Cape at the Southern tip of Africa- 40,000 miles on his BMW R 60.

SEE YOUR NEAREST AUTHORIZED BMW DEALER, OR FOR INFORMATION WRITE TO:
EAST: BUTLER & SMITH, INC., 160 WEST 83RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10024
WEST: FLANDERS COMPANY, 200 WEST WALNUT STREET, PASADENA, CALIF. 91103
CANADA: NORTHWEST MOTORS LTD., 2321 KEELE STREET, TORONTO 15, ONTARIO

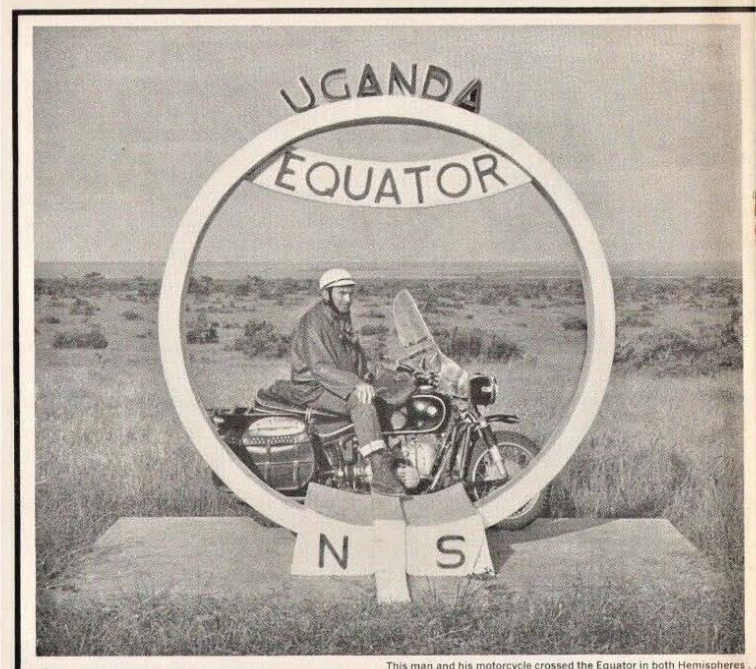
1966-04 BMW Wedding Trip Advertisement with Danny

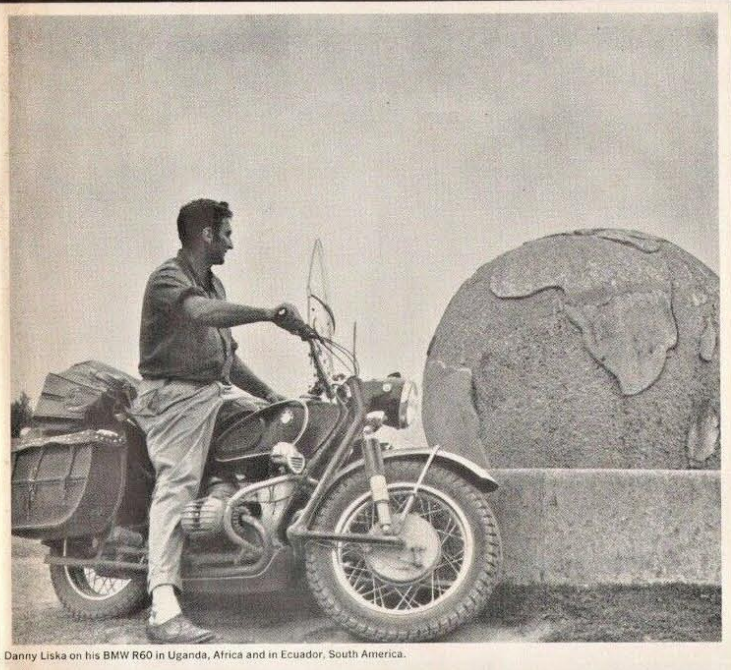
An Indian Chief in Ecuador offered me five wives for my devil machine. To be exact, it was a package deal with all the wives' children included. A most unusual trade-in offer, even for a BMW.

From Danny Liska's diary of his trip from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, the Southern tip of South America- 50,000 miles on the BMW R 60

SEE YOUR NEAREST AUTHORIZED BMW DEALER, OR FOR INFORMATION WRITE TO:
EAST: BUTLER & SMITH, INC., 160 WEST 83RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10024
WEST: FLANDERS COMPANY, 200 WEST WALNUT STREET, PASADENA, CALIF. 91103
CANADA: NORTHWEST MOTORS LTD., 2321 KEELE STREET, TORONTO 15, ONTARIO

1966-05 BMW Solo Advertisement





This man and his motorcycle crossed the Equator in both Hemispheres . . . Danny Liska on his BMW R60 in Uganda, Africa and in Ecuador, South America.

East Side...West Side...All Around the World

East: Butler & Smith, Inc.
160 West 83rd St., New York, N.Y. 10024

West: Flanders Company
200 West Walnut St., Pasadena, Calif. 91103

Canada: Northwest Motors, Ltd., Toronto, Ontario.

1967 BMW Solo Advertisement with Danny Liska

When BMW riders meet, they become friends.

In lion country near Mt. Kilimanjaro we met Russ of Salt Lake City. We rode the African veldt together for seven weeks before our trails parted in Rhodesia.

Later Arlene and I received a letter from our friend, Russ Scoville, Associate Director of the Peace Corps in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia:

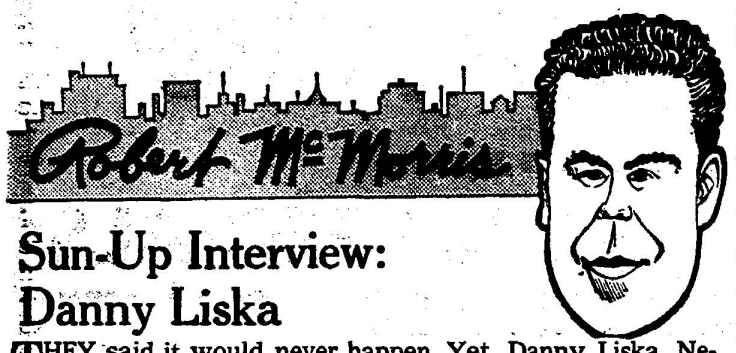
". . . When I left you at Karila Dam I continued south to Basutoland and Swaziland before riding north again towards East Africa and Ethiopia. Seventeen thousand miles in four months. I carried full camping gear and a week's supply of food. My R 27 needed only a speedometer cable, a set of points, a spark plug, and a front fender job (my fault) during that period."

From Danny Liska's diary of his trip from the North Cape in Norway to the South Cape at the Southern tip of Africa – 40,000 miles on his BMW R60.

SEE YOUR NEAREST AUTHORIZED BMW DEALER, OR FOR INFORMATION WRITE TO:
EAST: BUTLER & SMITH, INC., 160 WEST 83RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10024
WEST: FLANDERS COMPANY, 200 WEST WALNUT STREET, PASADENA, CALIF. 91103
CANADA: NORTHWEST MOTORS LTD., TORONTO 15, ONTARIO

1967-02 BMW Couples Advertisement

Omaha World-Herald
Metropolitan News
6M OMAHA, NEB., SATURDAY, MAY 6, 1967



Sun-Up Interview: Danny Liska

THEY said it would never happen. Yet, Danny Liska, Nebraska's No. 1 rover boy, may have lost some of his wanderlust. After visiting 65 (or maybe it's 66) countries, traveling 200 thousand miles (outside this country) by motorcycle, boat, truck, land rover, ship, canoe, raft, plane, horse and donkey, he has elected to stop for breath—and to write a book.

For the first time in a long, long while, he has no immediate plan for travel.

Except for lecturing and for work to protect his Niobrara ranch against erosion, Danny has spent most of his time since last October in his wood-paneled attic, laboring over his typewriter.

Large windows under the gabled roof give him "a magnificent view of a lot of the world." To the north lies South Dakota. The Missouri and the Niobrara Rivers chart a serpentine course among the hills to the west.

Once in a while, something out there moves, and the typist will pause and examine it with binoculars.

Danny . . . Stop for breath.

* * *

Home Sweet Home

DANNY LISKA, whose stories of his adventures have regaled World-Herald Magazine of the Midlands readers for years, says home "looks mighty good" to him now.

"It's good," said the 38-year-old rancher, "to get out on that old porch and fill your lungs with clean air. It's nice to forget for awhile about eating rotten monkey meat and camel meat and all the worms, bugs, amoeba and fungus, and how many months and months you went without a good drink of water. You learn to appreciate home."

Danny's wife, who accompanied him on several of his back-trail treks, is quick to agree.

In fact, Danny said, talk of new adventures is "pretty much of a sore point with her. It's a taboo subject right now around the house . . . Women aren't so interested in conquering the unknown. They're not that sort of bunch."

* * *

Confession

WHEN Mrs. Liska was out of earshot, Danny confessed that he was in a mood to search out still other worlds—such as Antarctica and the Asian land mass—as late as last fall.

But "circumstances" discouraged him—notably the circumstance of a trip to Washington. He had gone there to ask permission to accompany the next governmental expedition to Antarctica.

Those in charge said they might have approved his going to Antarctica, as a correspondent, but the timing of his request was unfortunate. There were too many similar requests at the moment.

It's possible now to go to Antarctica as a member of a private tour. But Danny has always disdained such organized, nicey-nice travel. "They'd show you an ice cake and let you play with the penguins, but that's all," he said.

* * *

Nyet!

DANNY thereupon approached the Soviet Embassy in Washington, introduced himself as "just a Nebraska country boy with an itchy foot" who wanted to travel by jeep from Moscow to Vladivostok.

"They turned me down cold," Danney said. "I'm sure they couldn't believe that curiosity alone would make me want to make the trip." He wouldn't mind Intourist accompaniment. Nyet to that, too.

* * *

They're What?

THE Nebraska country boy next went to New York to see about traveling in Mongolia, whose People's Republic the United States does not recognize.

As he approached the offices of the Mongolian legation to the United Nations, Danny was "surprised to find a lot of 'Indians' around there. I was sure they were Poncas and Santees, like the Indians at Niobrara, and I was about to say, 'Hi, when I decided I didn't happen to know any of them."

Danny's surprise increased when he discovered that the "Poncas" and "Santees" had apparently taken over the whole building.

They were, of course, not Indians at all, but Mongols. And they saw no reason "to allow you to travel in our country when we can't travel in yours."

In any case, Danny had lost much of his desire to visit Mongolia. "When you travel, you want to see people who are different," he explained. "If I went to Mongolia I realized it'd be just like walking down the main street of Niobrara."

* * *

First, the Book

MEANWHILE, back at the ranch, Danny (again in a soft voice) does not rule out another attempt to get to Antarctica or the Soviet Union some day. But he's determined to first finish his book. It's a chronicle of his travels.

He said he had discussed the book with Random House, which seemed interested and encouraged him to write it.

The only one of the four Liska boys who declined to be "sensible" and stay home—his brothers all have ranches near by—Danny said he believes all human beings have a "natural urge" to travel. "I just didn't happen to suppress the urge, as most people do."

He remembers the time when he got a motorcycle at the age of 16 and he "ventured across the Missouri River to South Dakota. It looked like Siberia. It looked like adventure." It was a sight that "started something."

* * *

Lesson of the Ant Bear

HE GOT the idea of writing a book, he said, by watching the ant bears of Africa. "There's a tribe in Africa, the Kikuyu, that has a lot of proverbs and sayings," he said. "One of the things they say is, 'Don't be like the ant bear.'

"The ant bear is a little animal that feeds on ants that live in huge anthills 10 to 30 feet high. The bear will dig in one hill a little bit, then he gets curious about another anthill. Maybe it's a different kind of hill. Maybe it's got different-tasting ants. So the bear goes over and digs there.

Then he moves on to another anthill. He goes all through life moving from one anthill to another, without accomplishing much.

"I got to feeling that I was like the ant bear. My curiosity had taken me a lot of places and I had learned a lot of things from a lot of people. It would be a shame not to share some of the wisdom of all these people.

"The book is about the anthills I have seen."

Trekking Through Both The Americas

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the final in a two-part series dealing with the experiences of Danny Liska, a Nebraska man who traveled much of the little-explored world in search of adventure. He visited the Quad-Cities recently.

By JIM ARPY

When Danny Liska decided to give up ranching and go adventuring he considered this advice of a Chinese philosopher: "If you want to play the harp, play it. Don't talk or dream about playing the harp, do it."

Liska had always been fascinated by adventure stories, but his only foray into the unusual had been a motorcycle trip to Mexico and an unsuccessful attempt to climb the volcano Popocatepetl.

But in 1959 he was 30 years old and felt he was becoming more and more isolated from the intriguing world outside. Accordingly, he and his wife let the cattle dry up, put the land in the soil bank, and headed into the unknown.

A SEVEN-WEEK photographic trip through Alaska only whetted his desire to try what he had often considered impossible — a trip from Circle City, Alaska, the northernmost settlement in North America that could be reached by road to Ushuaia, Argentina, the most southern town in the tip of South America.

Before the trip was over, he would have awakened to find vampire bats sucking his blood, eaten monkey and lizard to stay alive, survived a jungle trial by savages, traveled with smugglers and served as a double for movie actor Yul Brynner.

On his motorcycle, he traveled Alaska's trackless tundra, whizzed past vast herds of wild game, fought choking dust and flying rocks.

WAS HE READY for such a strenuous undertaking as the Alaska to Argentina trip? In Mexico, he sought out his old adversary, Popocatepetl. If he could climb it, he felt he would have the strength and endurance for what lay ahead.

On a foggy morning, he strapped spikes on his boots and began the ascent. After what seemed like hours, he collapsed in the snow, his lungs on fire. Then slowly he got to his feet and resumed the climb.

"As I walked up the mountain a step at a time. I realized that there is only one way to get to the top, whether it be a mountain or a goal in life. A man should make the next step his goal, not the whole mountain," Liska says.

When he stood on the top of the old volcano, he knew he would finish his terrible journey. Liska's wife, Arlene, joined him in Mexico and the two headed for Panama. Heavy rains and unfinished roads slowed their progress. In Costa Rica, it took them five weeks to go 120 miles. Then Mrs. Liska became ill and took a plane in Panama City to return to the States.

The road ended 37 miles outside of Panama City. Beyond were 450 miles of the most impenetrable jungle in the world. There were no roads or trails — only vines, jungle, snakes, wild Indians and bloodthirsty vampire bats.

AS LISKA stood surveying a sign that said: "End of the Road. Here begins the Darien Gap," a Panamanian walked up and said, "Mon, you're crazy to think about going into that jungle. No mon goes in there and comes back!"

But Liska knew that somewhere beyond the endless jungle was Turbo, Colombia and the magic line that would carry him, aboard his motorcycle, to the end of his personal rainbow — the very tip of South America.

The trip in Costa Rica had been through 14 days of torrential rains. There had been landslides and 38 bridgeless rivers to cross, the cycle having been shipped ahead to Medellin, Colombia.

"People said I was crazy and I didn't deny it. You have to be a little insane to try a trip like this," Liska says.

IN HIS RUCKSACK he carried food for two days, a hammock, camera, machete, hunting knife, penicillin in a syringe, extra socks, mosquito repellent, matches and garlic, which a witch doctor assured him would keep snakes at a distance.

On Dec. 5, 1960, he plunged into the jungle with a Spanish-speaking guide. They traveled in a piraqua, a craft hewn from a single tree truck. Down rivers they went.

Adventure Unlimited

pausing at Indian villages to seek a guide to take Liska through the Chucunaque Valley. He finally obtained the services of a young Indian named Manuel for $3 a day.

For days they hacked through vines and ferns until Liska thought they were hopelessly lost, but eventually they came out onto a well-trod trail. They moved into Vala Indian territory, a forbidden stretch of jungle where they were arrested for being without permission.

The guide, Manuel, was taken away and Liska was put through a trial of sorts. He was asked what position he held in his home town of Mobara, Neb.

"I shouted, 'I am president of the Mobara Community Club!' A look of awe swept their faces and they set me free," Liska says.

AN OLD WITCH doctor volunteered to lead him through the jungle. In five lazy days of floating down the river, fishing and swimming, the two men became fast friends.

"Sometimes we'd throw stones at alligators. Often we'd stop to eat monkeys or lizards. We moved from one Indian village to another," Liska recounts.

At the banana port of El Real, Liska contacted a group of smugglers who agreed to take him into Colombia for $7. The Darien area then was reeling from a terrible flood. The men saw bodies of animals and an occasional Choco Indian hut floating by.

One day one of of the smugglers became quite ill and was holding up the rest of the party. Liska heard a shot and discovered the smugglers had shot their companion to put him out of his misery. They threw his body into the river and divided his property.

Near the village of Boca de Coupe, Liska retired in a jungle hut, sleeping on the floor because he was too tired to set up his hammock.

He awoke as he became aware of a gentle fanning above his face and noted a musky odor. When he felt some creature crawling up his body he jumped up and found the room was full of vampire bats, one of which had been feeding on his big toe.

IN PERU, Liska's motorcycle broke down and he had to wait three months for parts. This gave him time to explore the Amazon River, the mountains and jungle areas, and to meet various Indian tribes.

In Southern Argentina, an area of few roads and fewer people, he often had to drag his motorcycle through heavy snow. One day the machine tipped over 50 times.

And then one morning he came over the crest of a hill and below him stretched the ocean and the end of his rainbow, but instead of being exhilarated, Liska felt let down. He still thirsted for challenges.

He next discovered that money his wife had sent him months before had been returned to the States. He caught a free ride on a boat and learned that the movie "Taras Bulba" was being filmed in northern Argentina. Liska joined a group of gauchos, en route to the site to serve as extras.

WHEN LISKA saw Yul Brynner, who was playing the lead role, he vowed to act as his double for dangerous work. He got his chance when the regular double refused to ride a horse at full gallop down a treacherous hill. Liska got the part and thereafter led 7,000 men into mock battle.

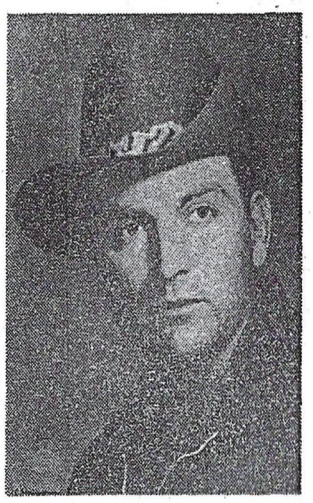
After he returned home, Liska and his wife returned to South America and traveled through Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay.

"In Central America we saw zombies, the so-called living dead. They were men without expression and moved as though in a trance.

"I talked to a college professor who said that when his brother died, he and his father and other brothers stood around the coffin. Then his father said, 'It is your duty as the eldest son,' and handed him a dagger which he plunged into his brother's heart. The people believe this is the only sure way to make sure a person who is apparently dead cannot be turned into a zombie by unscrupulous persons with supernatural powers.

"When I was in Africa I saw repeated evidence of some powerful form of telepathy. Wherever I went, even in the most remote parts, the people knew I was coming. It was as if they had seen me on tv. Yet there were no methods of communication and no way they could have known about me. No way, that is, except through sophisticated mental telepathy," Liska says.

He hopes some day to take a motorcycle trip through Russian Siberia, but thus far the Russians have turned down his requests.



1970-12-23 Trekking Through Both the Amercas, Adventure Unlimited Part 2

1970s Danny and Regina

1970s Danny, Johanna, Regina

'Ex-Witch' Confounds Colombia With Election Wins, by Charles A. Krause, Washington Post

BOGOTA, Colombia, March 17, 1980 -- Every afternoon, thousands of Colombians, most of them women and the vast majority of them poor, gather outside the temple of Regina XI, located amid factories, warehouses and karate parlors in one of Bogota's industrial slums.

They wait for hours to enter the temple's meeting hall, a three-story auditorium where their "mother," Regina Betancourt de Liska, who calls herself Regina XI, will greet them.

The small, attractive 43-year-old woman, who claims to be a mystic, a faith healer, a seer and a prophet -- and who now clearly is a political force -- enters to the screams of delight from her fanatic followers. They count to 10 and then exclaim: "Regina Eleven! Viva Regina Eleven!" They rush to touch her, receive her blessing, press money into her hands, and begin an hour-long ritual of handholding, guttural chanting and bizarre rites which she says impart her "magnetic energy" to those who believe.

In just 10 years, she has gathered several hundred thousand followers throughout Colombia. A canny combination of Elmer Gantry, the guru Maharaji Ji and George Wallace, Regina XI outraged Colombia's Roman Catholic church three years ago when she drew at least 50,000 of her followers to a mass at the Bogota cathedral celebrating her 40th birthday.

Newspaper headlines the next day trumpeted "Scandal in the Cathedral" and began referring to her as "Regina the Witch." The sobriquet, which she says she finds amusing, helped her movement grow.

In local elections held last week, the irrepressible Regina again infuriated the political establishment by getting herself elected to not one but two city councils, in Bogota and Medelin, and two state assemblies.

The feat made her a political power to be reckoned with. As politician, she radiates the charisma and energy she claims to impart to the masses who enrich her by buying the magnetized olive oil, youth creams, perfumes, half-nude plastic Regina statuettes and T-shirts that she sells.

Two years ago, she ran for president and lost. But she pulled off a stunt that has earned her a place in Colombian history as the first aspirant for office to sell votes rather than buy them.

It is the practice in Colombian elections for political parties to provide their backers with ballots. Regina says more than 180,000 of her followers bought her ballots for 10 cents apiece, demonstrating their loyalty and helping to finance her campaign.

Although most political observers have yet to take Regina's latest strong showing seriously, a few are saying she has tapped a segment of potential voters, the working poor, who normally do not vote. The abstention rate fluctuates between 65 and 75 percent here.

Regina is the ultimate outsider who is using her religious following to create a political movement by promising to oust the entrenched, inbred traditional politicians and work on behalf of the poor.

"I don't have any sons or brothers who are government ministers. My husband isn't a former president," Regina said the other day as she sat on the throne she keeps in her temple office.

"All I am is an ex-witch," she says laughing at the newspaper which, because of her electoral victory, are now forced to refer to her as "the honorable" rather than "the witch."

The Bogota newspaper El Tiempo, summing up local voting results, headlined: "Nine liberals, six conservatives, four leftist and Regina." Clearly, neither the newspaper nor the politicians know what to make of her.

Regina's message is health, money and love, in that order. She give her poor followers the hope that they can improve their lives -- by believing in her and, through her, in themselves. Her temple contains a free dental clinic, an employment agency, a printing plant and a restaurant where subsidized hot meals are offered for less than a dollar.

"Our enemy is resignation," said Briceida de Rojas, a housewife and mother of five, who attended one of Regina's sessions. De Rojas credited Regina with saving her and her children from dying in a bus accident. "If we hadn't had her course and practiced, we wouldn't have survived. Her energy is with us and our energy is with her."

Regina XI says she made mental contact with Angelo Roncalli, who was later Pope John XXIII, in 1941 when she was 4. She claims that he endowed her with the "XI" of her title after telling her that he was 10th in a line of teachers and prophets.

She claims powers to cure and prophesy the future. In the quiet of her office, she says she ran for office because she believes Colombia's politicians "have never done anything for the poor. I don't like poverty. They have never done anything to bring education. They've closed the hospitals, they've permitted drugs to destroy the youth and they've stolen a lot."

Regina XI may best be described as a populist, appealing to the same voters who supported Gen. Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, a military dictator during the 1950s who almost recaptured the presidency in the 1970 election. While it is still too early to tell whether Regina XI is a political fluke or phenomenon, there is little doubt that she has been brilliant in convincing hundreds of thousands of Colombians to follow her into the occult world she inhabits. **She now has five temples in Bogota, Medellin, Cali, Pereda and Manecales. She says her monthly budget is $20,000.**

Danny Liska, 51, her American husband, still owns a ranch in his native Nebraska and once worked as Yul Brynner's stand-in during the filming of "Taras Bulba." He says Regina is taking votes away from the left appealing to the peasants and urban working class who, if they voted, would probably have favored the communists and other leftist parties. Liska, who now resembles Tiny Tim, with hair cascading down past his broad shoulders, says, "Regina is almost violently pro-American. She always holds up the United States as the example. Communism, she believes, is foolish."

Liska says she sometimes earns $30,000 on a single weekend from the courses she teaches Thousands more come in from the plastic dolls, clothing and toiletries she sells. She is driven around in a big Buick, has a luxurious home in Bogota and a residence in Miami like other wealthy Colombians.

"We learned early on that we had to travel first class to be taken seriously," Liska explained. "I thought, when she first started out, that she would be lucky to break even. What has happened is phenomenal."

Colombia's Presidential Race : Candidate Knows 'Witch' Way to Vote, by Patricia Walsh, Los Angeles Times, May 18, 1986

Next week, voters in Colombia will have an opportunity to elect a witch as president. If they do, she promises to use her broom to sweep corruption from government. Regina Betancourt de Liska is known to her followers as "Regina 11"--and to her opponents as a "witch."

She is a self-proclaimed faith healer, mentalist and levitationist who says she has mentally tuned in to a future Pope, cured her infant daughter of a fatal illness and trained disciples to "magnetize" the masses who come to her for good luck. And come to her they do. Hundreds of scribbled requests are left at the feet of nude plaster statues of her that she has placed behind her auditorium--a three-story brick building in an industrial area.

"Here the people love me, they admire me," Regina said in an interview. "I've never spent one cent on politics." Regina, 49, first learned of her "powers" at age 4 when she says she rose through the air to touch a light bulb. "My mother saw me and screamed. She took me to a priest to be exorcised," she said.

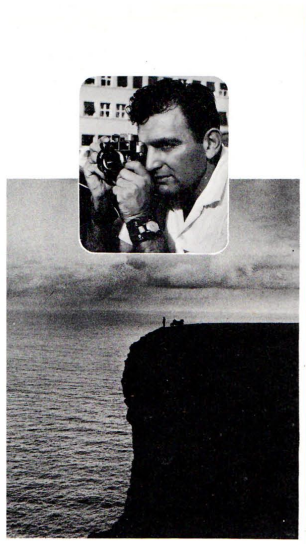
During her youth, she said, she spoke through mental telepathy with an Italian priest named Angelo Roncalli, who told her: "One day you will be known by the number 11 and I by the number 23." She says she never actually met the future Pope John XXIII, but nevertheless took his words to heart and began calling herself "Regina 11."

Her husband is a believer. Her husband, Nebraska-born Danny Liska, said he first witnessed his wife's power when their daughter was born with a fatal lung defect. He said Regina massaged or "magnetized" the tiny girl, who is now a healthy 16-year-old. He also swears to his wife's other powers. "She does levitate from a table and lights emanate from her. I've been all over the world, and I don't know anything that compares with it."

Although it may take witchcraft for her to win, she is not without a following. Colombians who seek her gifts commonly are among the poor and unemployed in a nation with 14% unemployment and 22% annual inflation. And she is not a political novice. In the March elections, she received almost 19,000 votes in a losing bid for Congress.

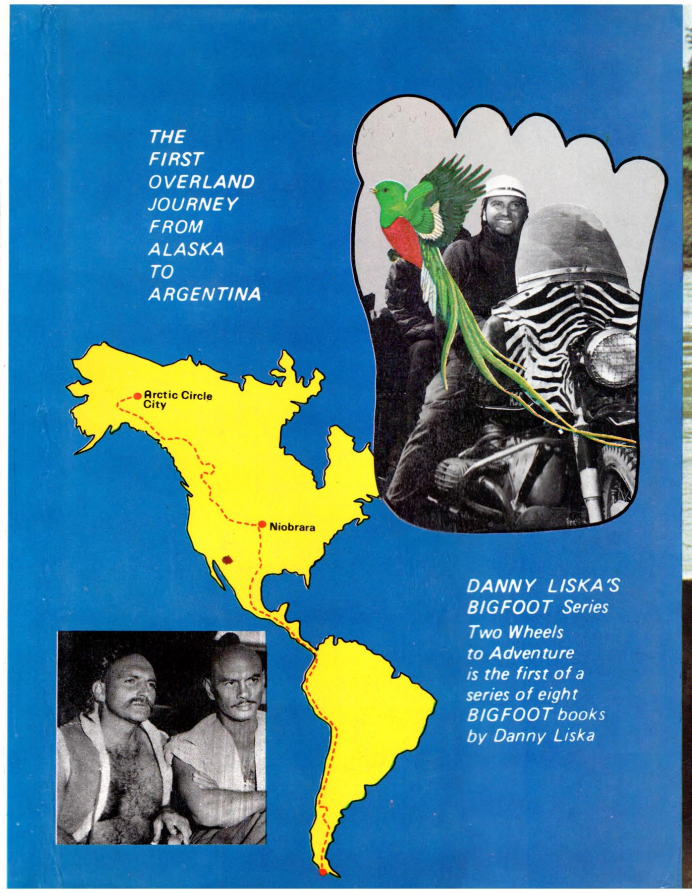
Nevertheless, the more traditional candidates in the nation of 27 million are unconcerned. The two main parties, Conservatives and Liberals, have dominated Colombian politics since Simon Bolivar won independence from Spain in 1819. Veteran politician Virgilio Barco, 64, has received the Liberal nomination while lawyer-journalist Alvar Gomez, 66, is running for the Conservatives. The election is May 25.

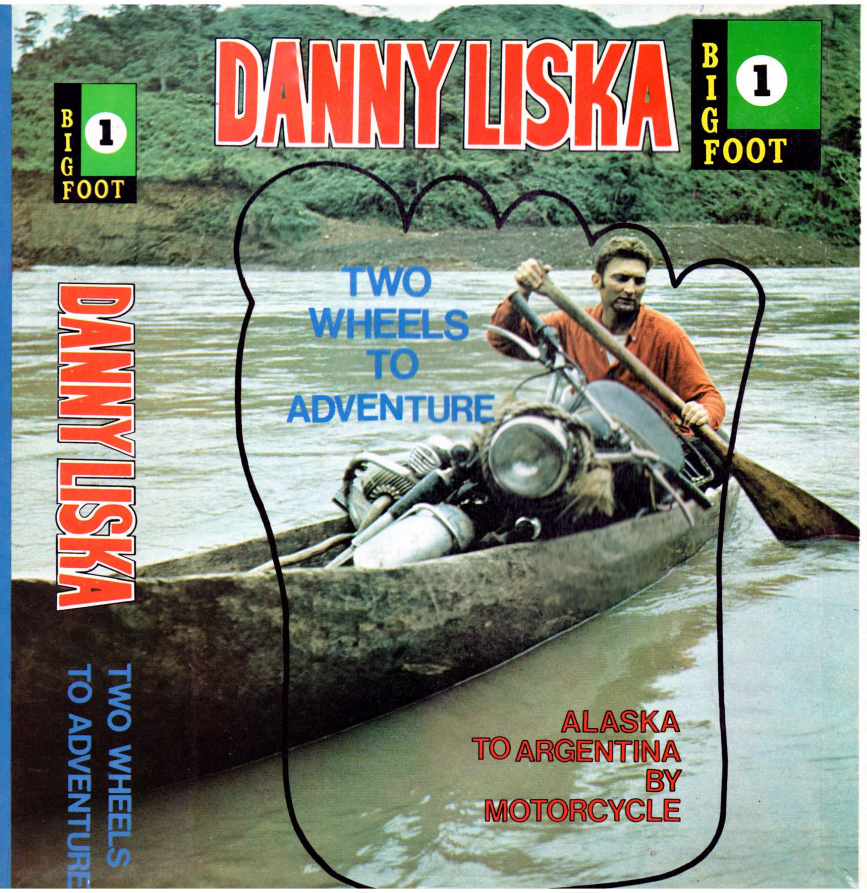
1989 Two Wheels to Adventure Dust Cover, Printed in Bogota



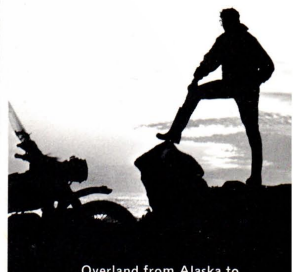
Taken from the
GUINNESS BOOK OF MOTORCYCLING FACTS AND FEATS:

"Danny Liska of Nebraska rode a 600 cc BMW R60 from northern Alaska to the tip of South America. As a sequel, he rode 40,000 miles to complete a longitudinal transit of the Old World, going from the northernmost point in Scandinavia to the southernmost tip of Africa."





WHEN THE WIND IS RIGHT



Overland from Alaska to Argentina by motorcycle, canoe and Indian trail, this is an adventure story second to none.

NEBRASKAland Magazine:
"Danny Liska is what most men want to be — an adventurer. Think of the most fantastic events that could happen to a man and they have probably happened to Danny. Vampire bats have sucked his blood, he has eaten monkey and lizard to stay alive, traveled through a jungle with smugglers, suffered from malaria, doubled as a stunt man for Yul Brynner and ridden a motorcycle over 200,000 miles."

Book design and layout by the author

Regina Liska—Colombia's Political Psychic, by Ron Chepesiuk, Fate, April 1990, V43N4

The visitor, says Regina Liska, came 46 years ago when she was five years old. Liska still vividly remembers his face and voice, and how his person filled the room with a phantasmic glow. He had come, he said, to instruct her.

"From this day on, I will accompany you wherever you go," the visitor explained in a resonating voice. "I will provide you with knowledge and help so that you can share that wisdom with all mankind. Little one: very soon the people will need you. And less you become besieged with doubt, I will answer your every question. Some people will say you are mad, but others will love you for your warm and charming personality... Whoever tries to harm you will be ruined, and die a tragic death. Many people, for having thought evil thoughts about you, will cry out to you in pain. Whoever deceives you, deceives himself."

The teacher, who Liska believes was Angelo Rancalli, Bishop of Turkey, later to become Pope John XXIII, stayed with his young pupil for almost seven years. She claims that Rancalli's wise tutelage has made her the 11th in line of a series of teachers to the world who will use their special powers to help redeem humankind. Today, Liska's teachings and charismatic personality have made her one of Colombia's most popular personalities, who can claim a following in the hundreds of thousands, if not millions. Popularly known as Regina XI, she claims to be a seer, psychic, faith healer and prophet.

Regina XI has also used her influence to start a political movement making her a long- shot candidate for the Colombian presidency in the country's last two elections. She has taught a "Mental Relaxation" course that has spread her popularity beyond Colombia to other parts of Latin and Central America as well as Europe and the U.S. Some of her biggest American devotees can be found in the Midwest, particularly Nebraska and Iowa. Each week Colombians tune in their radios to hear Regina XI expound on psychic healing and the powers of the mind. Titled "El Magnetico de Regina XI," her program is the highest rated in Colombia.

Her enemies—and there are many—denounce her as a witch and a phoney who takes advantage of the poor and ignorant. For nearly 15 years, she has been involved in a bitter rivalry with the country's Catholic church for the hearts and minds of Colombia's poverty-stricken masses. But for the faithful, "mecca" is a three-story red brick building named "Centro Regina," in southwest Bogota.

"Let me show you around," says Danny Liska, Regina's husband and business manager, after a strong handshake. As we tour the complex, hundreds of Colombians, most of them women and poor, stream in and out of the building. In the auditorium, which can hold 2,000 people, a large crowd gathers to chant, breathe and move as part of special exercises conducted by a young woman, who shouts instructions through a microphone.

Centro Regina can be compared to a small empire, for it contains a printing plant, free dental and medical clinic, unemployment agency, travel agency, pharmacy, cafeteria, and much more. Later, I learn that the building also includes facilities providing for the mass production of a line of consumer products—perfumes, youth creams, half-nude plastic Regina statuettes, t-shirts, magnetized olive oil—which are sold all over Colombia. According to one published source, the Liskas' activities bring as much as $30,000 in a good week.

"Most of them would be out in the street, stealing or getting into trouble," Danny says with conviction, in reference to the 150 employees of Regina Centro, who are from Bogota's poorer neighborhoods. The energetic and quick-talking Nebraskan looks out of place in the Colombian setting. Broad shouldered and standing about 6' 2" tall, the 59-year-old manager of the complex towers

above the native staff. Dressed in a green jumpsuit and wearing a gold chain with a tiger's tooth, Liska's tight smile and physical appearance gives him a strong resemblance to comedian Danny Thomas.

"The center is a place of metaphysics that helps people to know themselves and to learn how to use their mental powers," explains Regina Liska, when we finally meet in her office. On first glance, I wonder what is so charismatic about this psychic who can attract over 80,000 Colombians into a stadium or an open air plaza for one of her combination spiritual/political rallies.

Dressed in a purple dress with shoes to match, Regina is petite, comely and soft-spoken. At 51 years of age, she has four daughters and four grandchildren, but could easily pass for a woman in her early 40s. Regina feels uncomfortable with her English, so her husband does the translating from Spanish and fills in the gaps with long monologues about his wife. Having helped with an English version of Regina's autobiography and written several articles about her so-called "great powers," the husband knows her story inside out.

Regina Liska was born the last of 18 children to devout Roman Catholic parents on December 16, 1936, in the little mountain village of Concordia, located in Colombia's coffee-growing country of southwestern Antioquia. Her father wanted to be a priest, but left the seminary to marry Regina's mother, who was about to join a convent and become a nun. "I think my mother took her religion more seriously than my father," Regina recalls. "During the years that I knew her, she attended mass three times a day— morning, afternoon, and night. Every day of my childhood, she shook her children awake at 4 a.m. and had us ready for the 5 a.m. mass."

That changed when the visitor came and began to tutor his young pupil. Soon after, Regina claims, she began to manifest strange powers. Once, while Regina levitated on the ceiling. her mother came into her room and screamed, causing the child to fall to the ground. Believing her daughter to be in league with a devil or witch, the mother took the child to a priest to be exorcized. Regina says that by age seven she had formed the habit of going into a trance at night.

"Locking myself in a room, I would pull down the shades and turn the lights off," she recalls. "Then lying flat on my back with my hands palm-down at my side, I would breathe heavily as I mentally gave instructions to direct my spirit to the places I wanted to go."

Married at age 17, "to get away from home," Regina became a widow ten years later when her husband died of stab wounds inflicted by his business partner in a quarrel over money and property. It is one of many important events in her life she claims to have known about before it happened. "Once, Regina stretched herself out to seven feet tall and was hard as rock. When I came into the room and saw her, I felt like running out screaming."

Four years later, Regina met Danny at the Medellin, Colombia's airport. It is no coincidence that Regina's rise to prominence as a psychic began shortly after their marriage in 1969. Before meeting Danny, Regina had worked as a secretary, textile worker and business woman, but did not try to lead the life of a psychic.

The peripatetic Liska had spent much of his life as a restless adventurer and sportsman until he met his future wife. His many exploits include doubling for the late actor Yul Brynner in the more dangerous scenes of "Taras Bulba" and piling up 95,000 miles between the Artie Circle and tip of South America in a six-month motorcycle trip, a feat that has put his name in the Guinness Book of World Records. He claims some fantastic things have happened to him, including eating lizards to stay alive and traveling through jungles with smugglers. Liska still has deep roots in his hometown of Niobrara (pop.

500) There he has a 1,200-acre spread named Bigfoot Ranch, which since 1983, has been the setting for an institute for the study of the paranormal.

In talking with Liska, it becomes apparent that he is his wife's fervent promoter and protector. "If you had been around Regina like I have, you will see the tremendous powers she has, particularly over Nature," Liska says enthusiastically. "I've seen, her open the sky and the Sun came out; stop a thunderstorm; bring rain when it's dry."

"I've got 6,000 typed pages that record what Regina has done. Once, Regina stretched herself out to seven feet tall and was hard as rock. When I came into the room and saw her, I felt like running out screaming."

Regina's claims include s topping Hurricane David before it wreaked havoc on Miami, and causing the defeat of Adolf Hitler by summoning the fierce Moscow winter of 1943 and paralyzing the German troops on the Eastern Front. Every December 31, says the psychic, she leaves her body and flies around the world, "touching every living thing."

Through his travels in the wilds of South America and Africa, Liska says he has seen people with great supernatural powers. He explains, "In Africa I have seen witch doctors call elephants into a village, pick out one particular guy and then have the elephants stomp him to death. My experience made me ready for Regina when I met her."

Regina did not begin to appear publicly until 1970 when she and Danny had a daughter, Johanna, who was born with a usually fatal disease, hyaline membrane.[1] As a "blue baby," Johanna was not given much chance to live, so Regina made a vow. "I promised myself that if my baby lived, I would go every place and teach people how to use the powers they have." The doctors believed Johanna would die, but she lived to grow strong and healthy, and Regina considers the daughter's recovery her greatest miracle.

In the early 1970s, Regina developed a ten-hour course called "Mental Relaxation," which today still remains the center of the psychic's teaching. Regina claims that Mental Relaxation can be of value to everyone regardless of age or education, teaching in a practical way, the "God-given gift that everyone has."

Danny adds, "She is trying to help people put a little control over their lives and realize who they are, what they are, and how they can better deal with themselves." Mental Relaxation includes instructions on how to send and receive mental messages and reveals methods of psychic healing and mental therapy. During the last part of the course, Regina demonstrates and explains the technique she uses in the nonphysical projection of human images.

According to Regina, each person's body is illuminated with an aura of light of various colors, which reveals his or her past, present and future. A blend of positive and negative forces creates this aura. Regina claims to know what the colors of the aura mean and how knowledge of it can help others.

---

[1] *Fact Check*: "Neonatal respiratory distress syndrome was known as hyaline membrane disease. The infant with neonatal RDS is often born premature and presents with signs of respiratory distress immediately after delivery or within minutes of birth. In untreated RDS, the symptoms will worsen over 48 to 72 hours towards respiratory failure. Prognosis of infants managed with antenatal steroids, respiratory support, and exogenous surfactant therapy is excellent. **Mortality is less than 10%**, with survival rates of up to 98% with advanced care. **With adequate ventilatory support alone, RDS improves within 4 or 5 days.** Increased survival in developed countries is in stark comparison to babies who received no intervention in low-income countries, where the mortality rate for premature infants with RDS is significantly higher, at times close to 100%."—*Neonatal Respiratory Distress Syndrome*, Sudeep Yadav; Brian Lee; Ranjith Kamity, 23 July 2023, National Library of Medicine, PMID 32809614.

Regina says that much of the psychic power she possesses comes from her astral travels through the universe. "It is a very stupid person who can look up at a sky full of stars and then insist no life exists out there," she believes. In a 1980 interview Regina claimed that, on several occasions, her mind-spirit visited other planets and saw that life similar to ours exists in other parts of the universe.

"Each planet has its own exclusive energy vibration and characteristic odor and no two are alike," she explained. "Highly intelligent humans are living on several of the planets that I visited. But I found out the hard way that you can't walk up and discuss these things with just any person. Some individuals don't like to talk about things that they can't understand, and refuse to consider concepts that do not fit into established thought patterns.

If you try to talk about flying saucers, many of your friends will listen to what you have to say—and later avoid you. Pretty soon someone has started the rumor that you are eccentric; then, you are kind of crazy."

Regina XI can also sound like a psychic version of Ann Landers or Norman Vincent Peale when she offers advice on the spirit world. Consider this section from one of her spiritual self-help books titled *Guardian Angels and How to Deal With Them*:

"The easiest way to determine whether you have a faithful guardian angel or whether you have one of those nasty ones is to take a close inventory of your past, present and future. If things haven't been going well, if you have had problems and a few days when everything went wrong, then I suggest you take this book home with you. It will h elp you educate your guardian angel, get it straightened out and back on the right track again It isn't hard to shape up a wayward guardian angel, but you have to know how. Remember: your guardian angel is your subconscious mind. It belongs to you and nobody else. Whether you like it or not, you're stuck with him for the rest of your life. So it's time that you get to know him better. Once you do, you will be surprised to see how it is easy to educate him, and don't be amazed at all the wonderful things he can do for you."

But advice like that has made her enormously popular among the Colombian masses, leading to friction with the country's powerful Catholic church. Regina admits to having a love-hate relationship with Catholicism. "I was born into the religion and I can't deny that." She confides, "I see a lot of value in Catholicism, but I feel the religion is being mismanaged by the church hierarchy. I don't believe in the negative, destructive thing—you are a sinner—which the church teaches. The Church has brainwashed the Colombian people."

Danny adds sarcastically, "The Church became worried about Regina because so many people were coming to her instead. The Church began to attack Regina when it stopped getting enough money in the hat."

The Church has countered Regina's growing influence by attacking her at every opportunity. In 1974 the Church brought charges against Regina, claiming she was practicing medicine without a license, and she was put in jail for a brief spell. "Regina Liska is a charlatan," charges the Rev. Jaime Valez, a Catholic priest who has studied Colombia's occult. "She exploits people."

The Liskas shrug off such scathing criticism, saying it is very understandable in light of Regina's challenge to the Church's power, and claim the Church is in a panic because at least 1,000 Colombian priests and nuns have taken Regina's Mental Relaxation course. Such claims infuriate many in the Colombian church. Emilio Toro, a Bogota-based priest, explained, "That is totally false. I don't know how she can say that." He then added, "Her ideas are like the witches and magicians you find all over Colombia. She is cleverer than most of them and so has been able to rise to a level of prominence."

Toro made reference to the enormous interest in the occult in Columbia. In Bogota alone it is estimated that there are 8,000 seers, mystics and magic vendors. "Occult in the U.S. is a dirty word," says Bob Jenkins, a retired state department official who has lived in Bogota for 20 years. "Here, it's not so. It's normal."

The feud came to a head in 1977 when Regina's followers held an unauthorized mass for her at Bogota Cathedral on the occasion of her 40th birthday. The city center came to a standstill when over 80,000 people crammed into the cathedral and plaza outside. An angry Catholic church condemned her gathering and put pressure on the Colombian government to cancel her radio show. To defend herself, Regina says, she decided to enter politics. Fortunately, in the 1978 presidential election, she backed winning candidate Juan Cesar Turborg, who put her radio program back on the air. She had actually wanted to run for president, but Colombia has a strange eligibility rule: either a doctorate or masters degree, or prior political office is required. Regina had neither qualification.

After the 1977 birthday mass, Colombian newspapers wrote of the "scandal in the church" and referred to Regina as a "witch." The psychic showed that she had formidable political talents by shrewdly accepting the title and then turning it against her detractors and enemies by making the broom her political symbol. "I'm going to sweep all the politicians out of office," she proclaimed.

Regina ran again in the 1980 local elections, winning council seats in two different cities and assembly seats in two different states. She had a campaign budget of only $8,000 compared to her opponents who shelled out over a million dollars each. Her platform was simple: She promised to create 1.2 million jobs. She ran for president again in 1986, collecting 64,000 votes.

In talking to Colombians about Regina XI, they describe her followers as devoted and at times fanatical. During my two- and-a-half hour stay, Danny pulled out several thick scrapbooks that bear testimony to the devotion. "Our enemy is resignation," Bleiceda de Hogas, a housewife and mother of five explained to a Washington Post reporter at a 1980 gathering. She had an accident and commented, "If we hadn't had a course and practiced, we wouldn't have survived. Her energy is with us and our energy is with her."

Despite the controversy, Regina XI continues to immerse herself in Colombian politics. Her latest project involves bringing a lawsuit against the country on behalf of Bogota's homeless. The suit claims that in the 1930s a rich Colombian gave a large part of the city center, which he owned, to the city fathers to be used in trust for the homeless. Instead, the city gobbled up the land through modern urban development. The suit involves hundreds of millions of dollars and the most choice real estate in Colombia.

"Regina's got a real brilliant lawyer working for her on the suit, says Danny. "It will probably go to the Colombian Supreme Court."

Life as a psychic on Colombia's political wild side does have its price, however. Liska informed me that, two days before our interview, Regina XI had received a death threat. "Regina is being her usual philosophical self about it," he confides. "Violence is the norm in Colombia since the drug cartel became so powerful. If you don't like someone it's very easy to get a murder contract for a couple of dollars." Danny adds, "Regina says that, as the 18th child born to her family, the odds were against her that she would live to experience what she has seen and done."

Lifetime of adventures ends

A man, familiar to many Plainview residents who knew him as a man who filled his life with adventures, died last week.

Danny Liska, a former resident of the Niobrara area, died at the age of 66 in Bogota, Colombia, where he had made his home for over 20 years.

Danny is more known in this area for his original travels on his 1948 Harley-Davidson motorcycle from Alaska to the southernmost tip of South America. He later traveled from the northernmost tip of Scandinavia to the southern tip of South Africa.

As he traveled he encountered many experiences, even served as a double for Yul Brynner as a stunt man in a movie.

Gifted in telling about his experiences, he frequently presented slide lectures in this area and frequently wrote articles for various newspapers including the Plainview News. In his early efforts at writing a book, much of the type was set at the News office in Plainview, yellowing with age, but eventually finding its way into a book that he did publish.

Nearly a quarter-century ago he made Colombia his home after marrying Regina Betancur, a well-known politician and a self-proclaimed mentalist and healer who went by the name Regina XI.

For the past three years he battled leukemia which resulted in his death. Funeral services were held in Bogota on Thursday. Relatives indicated there may be a memorial service in Northeast Nebraska.

1995-05-17 Danny Liska Obituary, Norfolk Daily News

'Two Wheels to Adventure'

Alaska to Argentina by bike

▶NEARLY 40 YEARS have passed since Danny Liska took one of the most adventurous motorcycle journeys of his era, riding a BMW R60 from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego.

Liska was the first, he claims, to complete this arduous ride. Today, many motorcyclists have tackled the trip from the northern tip of one continent to the southern tip of another. But back when Liska set off on his journey, it was the stuff of high drama.

I've wanted to read about Liska's travels ever since I saw pictures of him riding through deep jungle on his Beemer. BMW importers Butler and Smith featured those images on full-page ads during the '60s, so you'll see Liska straddling the equator on two wheels, or sculling along in his dugout canoe with the R60 loaded as baggage, in many old motorcycle magazines.

The few stories Liska penned back then covered only parts of his travels, but now the whole story is revealed in "Two Wheels to Adventure," Liska's account of his historic ride. An exciting read for much of its substantial heft, this two-year adventure is not chronicled with the journalistic skill of Ted Simon, whose "Jupiter's Travels" is a classic motorcycle road book. But Liska penetrates the veil of mystery hanging over unknown places.

He shares mosquito-ridden huts with Indians, chats with locals, or bunks down in a plantation as a guest of its wealthy owners. And he keeps pushing on, riding every part of the trip except the infamous Darien Gap between Panama and Colombia. The area would remain unconquered for decades more, until Ed Culbertson took another BMW through it in the '80s. As it is, the Darien is the only part of the Americas that Liska didn't cover on two wheels. He crossed it by foot and canoe; the bike flew.

Liska's most endearing quality is straight talk. Even when the story shows him in a bad light—as when he abandons a native guide on one leg of his struggle through the Darien Gap—Liska is not afraid to tell all. And a wonderful patchwork of a story it is.

Before starting the first leg of his mammoth trip in 1959, Liska noticed the trap most road books fall into, and sought to avoid it. Rather than covering miles at any cost, Liska sought out the stories of the road. He quizzed the folk he met up with in every little flyspot on the map. His catch-phrase: "Do the bears ever get dangerous?" broke the ice in Alaskan restaurants, bars and boarding houses. Without fail, he reports, someone would always rise to the bait with a story beginning: "Let me tell you..."

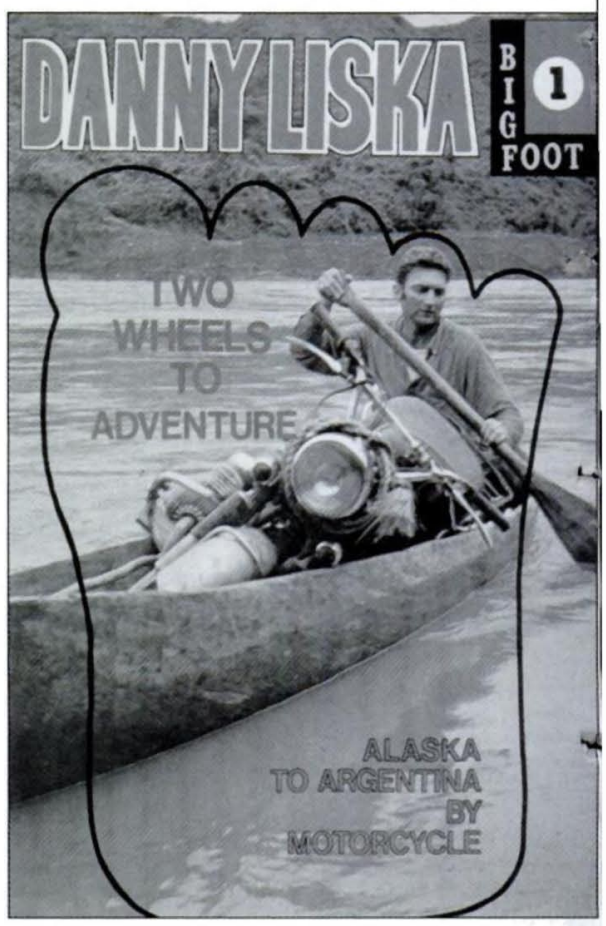
Because of his interest in the people he met, this motorcycling stranger was adopted by locals everywhere he went, and his adventure is much richer for it.

The manuscript was revised at the end of the 1980s, and edited to reflect recent history. But many critical chapters describing Central America, Liska claims, were untouched from his original '60s version. Still, it's sometimes difficult to believe that he managed to be in the right place for so much action, revolution and rebellion.

The book tells of trouble throughout Central America: murder by the police, murder and torture by hostile Indians. But there are also elements of the bizarre, including one mercifully short chapter taken up with Liska's short-lived career as a stunt double for actor Yul Brynner during the filming of the wholly forgotten "Taras Bulba."

Filming took 11 human lives and killed countless horses, according to Liska, who says he rode a heroin-doped horse throughout the filming. All this to produce what Time magazine would call: "The sort of colorful mess normally seen in a nursery-school watercolor set."

If you really want to scare yourself, though, read Liska's eyewitness accounts of candiru, the tiny parasitic catfish that invades the bodies of swimmers in some South American rivers (but not, Liska is at pains to inform us, the Darien Gap). Or look at his extensive collection of photos showing the BMW mired in mud up to the axles, and in one place, submerged in water up to the top of its fairing, a picture Liska admits was faked.



The text tends to lapse into homespun philosophy at times. Through these pages, you'll be yelling, "Enough, Danny, get back on the bike!" But these episodes are mercifully few, and the first-person accounts of travel through deep jungle, swamp and desert more than make up for them. You'll never be more grateful for the comfort of your armchair, or the interstate.—*Andy Saunders*

"Two Wheels to Adventure" sells for $39.95 plus $4 shipping and handling, and is available from Whitehorse Press, 3424 N. Main St., P.O. Box 60, Dept. AM, North Conway, NH 03860; or by calling (800) 531-1133.

Copyrighted material

View from the Bunker
by Bob Higdon
Part 129: Giants and Ghosts

Twenty motorcycles were already parked in front of the Two Rivers Saloon and Hotel in Niobrara, Nebraska when I arrived. Another twenty would appear before the cold, wet day ended. We had gathered in this tiny town in the middle of the Great Plains to meet the past and the legends who inhabited it.

Geographers know Niobrara as both one of Nebraska's oldest towns — Lewis and Clark camped in the area at the confluence of the Missouri and Niobrara rivers — and its newest, having twice been relocated to higher ground following flooding by the Missouri. Motorcyclists know it as the ancestral home of Danny Liska, who, as a result of some truly remarkable globe-trotting rides, was featured in ad campaigns for BMW bikes in the 1960s.

His story was, as he knew it would be, Hollywood drama at its finest: In 1959 a young Nebraska farmer leaves his wife, Arlene, behind to take care of the cattle, buys a BMW street bike, and heads off to Alaska, more than 3,200 miles away. Sticking the front wheel in the Yukon river, he then points the battered machine toward Ushuaia at the very bottom of South America. Along the way he hikes through the Darien jungle between Panama and Colombia and works as a stand-in for Yul Brynner during the filming of the movie *Taras Bulba* in Argentina.

Home again in Niobrara after 95,000 miles, he could have rested, knowing that few men in motorcycling had ever accomplished as much. But rest was the last thing on his mind. He negotiated the purchase of a new R60 through Butler & Smith, then the importers of bikes to the U.S., and took delivery of it in Germany from Schorsch Meier, another hero of the BMW marque. Between September 1963 and November 1964, Liska paralleled his earlier ride, this time from the top of Norway to the bottom of Africa.

Years later he recounted the first half of the odyssey in a self-published book, *Two Wheels to Adventure: Alaska to Argentina by Motorcycle*, almost 800 photo-laden pages of a writing style that mirrored his riding style: Straight ahead with blunt force. His world, like his photos, was black and white. If there is even one example of subtlety or nuance in the entire book, I cannot recall it. Still, you put it down with almost palpable relief and a sense that Liska has left nothing on the table.

But he had, and the truth was that in a couple of significant ways, his travels had been vastly different from what he had described.

In the first place, the rides had not been straight-shots from one pole to the other but in fact were frequently interrupted by Danny's having to return home for money, supplies, and energy. He was not a rich man — not many small-scale cattle farmers are — and even modest support from the few sponsors he was able to attract was still years in the future.

Even stranger was the complete absence of Arlene's name in the book. There are a thousand photos, mostly of Danny and spectacular landscapes, but not a single one of her. And yet, except for some brief intervals, she had been riding two-up with Danny on both expeditions almost every mile of the way. What in the world had happened?

Enter the other woman, this one an eerie Colombian mystic with the improbable name of Regina 11. Danny, always a sucker for the supernatural, had met her on one of his passages through the country. Eventually he divorced

Arlene, moved to Colombia, married the seer, wrote his book, and in the process eviscerated his former wife's part and presence in their travels.

It was a repudiation of almost Soviet-like coldness, where in the 1930s disfavored party officials found their names removed from history books and their images cut from group photos and replaced by bookcases and lamps. Indeed, the back cover photo of *Two Wheels to Adventure* shows Danny on the bike with an enormous parrot. But the bird is a superimposition. If you look carefully, you can just make out the edges of a second rider. It is, or was before the purge, Arlene.

Now 79, but neither looking nor acting her age, Arlene still resides in Niobrara, though the Bigfoot farm where she and Danny lived in happier days was sold out from under her years ago. In the hotel that night, May 12, she did a slide show of her travels in Africa with Danny.

"We picked up the motorcycle in Germany. It didn't run right. When we brought it back to Munich, Mr. Meier said that Danny wasn't operating it properly." A BMW rider in the back of the room said to laughter and cheers, "Some things never change."

Arlene clicks through the slides. They are of uniformly poor quality — Danny and Regina took all the good ones to South America — but there are some of a young, smiling, auburn-haired woman who sits on a motorcycle in the Transvaal on a summer's day. A few years in the future her life will come crashing down around her, but tonight she looks at the fading Kodachrome with a trace of a smile. She loved that man. You can feel it. She loves him still.

Eddie James, the American Motorcyclist Association's director of road riding and one of the usual suspects on the Iron Butt Rally, has dedicated himself to ensuring that Danny and Arlene receive the recognition they deserve for their incredible accomplishments. He might be the son they never had. Though he has seen Arlene's presentation before, he still concentrates on her intently as she speaks, perhaps assisting her with some kind of telepathy that Danny would have appreciated.

She shows us part of a zebra skin and some pelts from long-haired monkeys, handling them tenderly because they and a few other objects are all that she has left and they are literally disintegrating with age. Then, for the first time, her voice catches.

"I told Eddie this might be a difficult night for me," she says softly. "Today is the anniversary of the day that Danny and I were married. And this is the tenth anniversary of the day that he died."

He was a large man, and it would take something equally large to kill him. Leukemia did it. He wanted to be sent off like a Viking, incinerated on a pyre. Regina saw that it was done. It broke Arlene's heart.

But five years before his death I had had a chance to meet Danny for just a moment and to tell him how thoroughly I had enjoyed his book. A huge grin appeared on his face and I was instantly enveloped in a bear-hug. That was Danny, either suffocating or erasing you. Now, in a small town in the Plains, I had met the other side of an historic coin, a smaller but just as passionate and just as determined Liska. Together they had circled the globe; I felt a circle close as well.

Genesis 6:4 begins, "There were giants in the earth in those days." *There sure were*, I thought as I rolled past what once was the Bigfoot farm the next morning on my way to Omaha. *There sure were.*

https://www.dailynebraskan.com/author-saw-the-world-beyond-nebraska/article_acd48ba4-047d-5f4e-9b62-f628d547a2a0.html

Author saw the world beyond Nebraska

Feb. 4, 2007

*Editor's Note: Paranormal Plains is a series on things in the Midwest outside the mainstream - whether it be people, events or anything else outside the norm. Ideas or suggestions? E-mail paranormal@dailynebraskan.com.***NIOBRARA -** Niobrara was just home base. The world was Danny Liska's real home.

On the back of a BMW motorcycle, Liska rode from the Arctic Circle in Alaska down to the very tip of South America, coming back to the family ranch in Niobrara for food, supplies or money. It started in 1959 and continued on through 1960.

His travels were chronicled in the pages of the Omaha World-Herald, fantastic stories of the far-away places. It was a transcontinental feat no one had yet tried, especially on the back of a motorcycle.

From 1963 to 1964, he and then-wife Arlene would transpose the feat to an all-new place: the journey from the tip of Scandanavia to the southernmost capes of Africa.

The only times a BMW motorcycle wasn't taking them to these points were where it couldn't: across the Strait of Gibraltar or up through Italy from Africa to get back to Germany to repair the motorcycle's blown gaskets.

"Danny was different," said Charles Mulhair, a longtime friend of Danny. "The guy traveled all over the world. He took a motorcycle from the Arctic Circle to the tip of South America.

"Not everybody does that."

***

There were a lot of things different about Danny Liska. The fourth son of Johanna and Adolph Liska, Danny had the thick Czech accent from his family. He was a big figure, a tall man who loved a good story.

Mulhair remembers an especial interest of Danny's, one that the mere mention of would cause Danny's ears to perk up.

"Danny was very interested in unusual occurrences and maybe some things most of us don't subscribe to," Mulhair said.

It's no surprise, then, that later in his life, Danny would rename his family's land Bigfoot Ranch.

"I think it was a personal interest he had in supernatural things," Mulhair said.

There were the stories of the Great Snake of the Niobrara that his cousins, Delmer and Elmer Krupicka, would regale Danny with.

Or there was the time Mulhair was driving along and thought he saw a large black cat, only for it to blow away. Alas, only a tumble weed.

But when he told Danny this story, it was the large black cat he had wanted to latch onto.

And Mulhair couldn't forget the little bits of advice, such as the time Danny told him if he wanted to have good luck hunting, he needed to draw what he was hunting the night before.

"I wasn't much of an artist, so I never did," Mulhair said.

But Danny wasn't a kook or crazy by any means. No one who knew him would ever paint him as that.

Instead, he was a storyteller, a character, a man apart from the relative normality of the northeast Nebraska town he came from.

"He was different, and, of course, as you know, Nebraska is a down-to-earth part of the world, and people like that don't receive a lot of attention," Mulhair said.

***

Mulhair has been a lot in his life: school teacher, seasonal ranger for the Bighorn National Forest and a consultant for the Nebraska State Historical Society.

Mulhair has written historical accounts of the Niobrara area, such as "The Ponca Agency," readily available in the town.

He'd often talk with Danny about the history of the area, which is what often led to the stories that riled Danny's imagination.

Mulhair remembers the time he mentioned "galvinized Yankees" coming through during the end of the Civil War. These were captured confederates who fought for the Union.

"Boy, he (Danny) seized upon that, and sure enough it ended up in his next book," Mulhair said.

It was these books in which Danny chronicled anything and everything. "Two Wheels to Adventure" was about the North America to South America adventures, while "Ponca Curse" and "River-Rat Town"

were about the Niobrara area.

It was in "Ponca Curse" that Danny posited a theory of his own: The area was somehow cursed by embittered members of the Ponca Tribe who had suffered humiliations from the U.S. government.

The tome carries the tales of the area, mostly on oddities or tragedies. As the back of the books states, "With this, the Ponca shamans and an old XÃºbe squaw sorceress cast a curse on all the whites in the valley. Author Liska deals with the tragic events which subsequently befouled the beautiful Niobrara and Verdigris valleys and meticulously peels back the layers of the community most affected by the curse: Niobrara, Neb., his own home town."

There was the Krupicka Triangle, where tragedy continually befell his cousins, and, "Delmar Krupicka had to help pull out vehicles which had careened off the road and repair broken fences," continually on the land, all because of the XÃºbe sorceress who had been a mother to a young Ponca woman who had been raped and killed in the 1860s.

Then there's the incredible story of Arthur Frazier, thought to have been killed in World War I, only to reappear again.

Any quirk of Niobrara seemed to fall into the book, and the curse, for Danny, also explained why the city had been in three different places.

But the books are limited by scope, however wide. Any sort of story caught his attention.

"He always talked to people about (the unusual), any time he heard anybody seeing anything," Mulhair said.

***

At the mention of "the Ponca curse," Arlene Liska rolls her eyes. At the mention of Danny's second wife, Regina, her voice gets quieter.

But she still remembers the man she met and traveled with and, for the time of their marriage, lived with at the ranch.

She and Danny used to go around to area schools giving lectures on their travels, with hundreds of photos in tow.

She remembers how she met him, in an area supermarket where she worked. He had come in with Johanna, his mother, saw Arlene and asked, "And who might this young gal be?"

They started going to the movies - on his motorcycle, of course. Eventually, they would marry and

move out to what became Bigfoot Ranch, working the family land.

"As we got cattle and hogs, his heart was never in the farm," Arlene said.

His heart was on the road. More often than not, he was off on another of his adventures, wherever the destination was this time.

Some of the times, Arlene traveled with him, such as the Scandinavia to Africa adventure. On others, she simply had to go after him, such as when she had to find him in Mexico.

"And then he'd kind of scoff it off," she said. "(He said), 'What'd you think, I fell on my head or something?' "

When they traveled together, some of the accounts sent in to the Omaha World-Herald were Arlene's. She kept a meticulous travel journal and took a great portion of the photos on the trip.

She remembers running over the "11-foot tail" of a cobra in Africa, when they had to stop and hold their breath to make sure the deadly beast didn't strike.

Or there were the Macumba zombies in Brazil, people in permanent trance states, who she said were "just big strong men with no mind of their own. Zombies."

Danny's forte was events and things like the zombies, the "cultish" things they saw in South America. While he participated, she stayed away.

The photos of these travels show Danny in full immersion mode: dressing like the villagers, using the blowguns in competition with other people around.

Arlene hadn't the least hesitation about the cultures themselves. Instead, it was some of the ceremonies in which Danny had chosen to participate in that she preferred to stay out of.

"He'd get some weird ideas sometimes, and I'd have to squelch them," she said.

When she was in Niobrara, she didn't always know where Danny would be.

His thoughts, as well as his travel plans, were often his own, shared only when he needed to. Not that Danny was shy; just private.

"He wouldn't let his true self to people," Arlene said.

Some of the times, there was no notice to his leaving.

"I'd go to club or to town or something, and I'd come home and he'd be gone," Arlene said.

Eventually, it all became too much. Danny came back from Colombia with Regina and her four kids. By all accounts, Regina was a literal witch, only further fueling on Danny's esoteric interests.

It was the end of Danny and Arlene's marriage.

"I think somewhere along the way, he just went overboard," she said.

***

Danny Liska died in 1995 of leukemia. At that time, he was in Colombia, where he had begun to split his time. He'd either be there or at Bigfoot Ranch, the place that had continually been as much of a home as any place could have been.

Robert Olson, the village clerk for Niobrara, knew Danny. Around Niobrara, there were opposing viewpoints on what he "should" have done around town.

"I think some people think he should have stayed home and taken care of the ranch instead of traveling," he said.

Olson said that "writer, farmer, rancher" would be the most basic way to describe Danny's life. Certainly the writing part was always there, the books coming in his later years from his own Bigfoot Publishing Co.

It seems that the idea he should have kept to the ranch was a common sentiment in the town.

"I think I was one of the few people that had a lot to do with him when he was home," Mulhair said.

But the ranch wasn't Danny's life. The stories of people and the road were more his style.

This put him at odds with the expectations of those around him. They couldn't always fathom his insistence on traveling.

"They say most people live lives of quiet desperation - that wasn't Danny Liska," Mulhair said. "He didn't let what other people thought of him stand in his way. He did what he wanted to do."

Even Arlene, though she tried to reign in some of his weirder thoughts, was only doing the best she could.

"I couldn't run fast enough to keep up with how he thought," she said.

Though the hulking but personable adventurer is gone now, there are still those who admire his achievements. BMW riders come through Niobara, all hoping to hear Arlene tell them tales of the journeys they took.

A look around the writings of these "Night in Niobrara" events show an admiration for both Danny and Arlene Liska, icons to the people who adhere to the less-than-sedentary lifestyle. For the event, Arlene put together the articles the two wrote on their travels.

The record journeys aren't always on the books. But with the fervor for their icon held by their writers, there are those that would like it to be otherwise. After all, Arlene counts that, thanks to her journeys, she at one point knew 11 languages on a functional level and has visited more 60 countries in her life.

"Lots of motorcycle guys want us to be in the Guinness (World Records) for it," Arlene said.

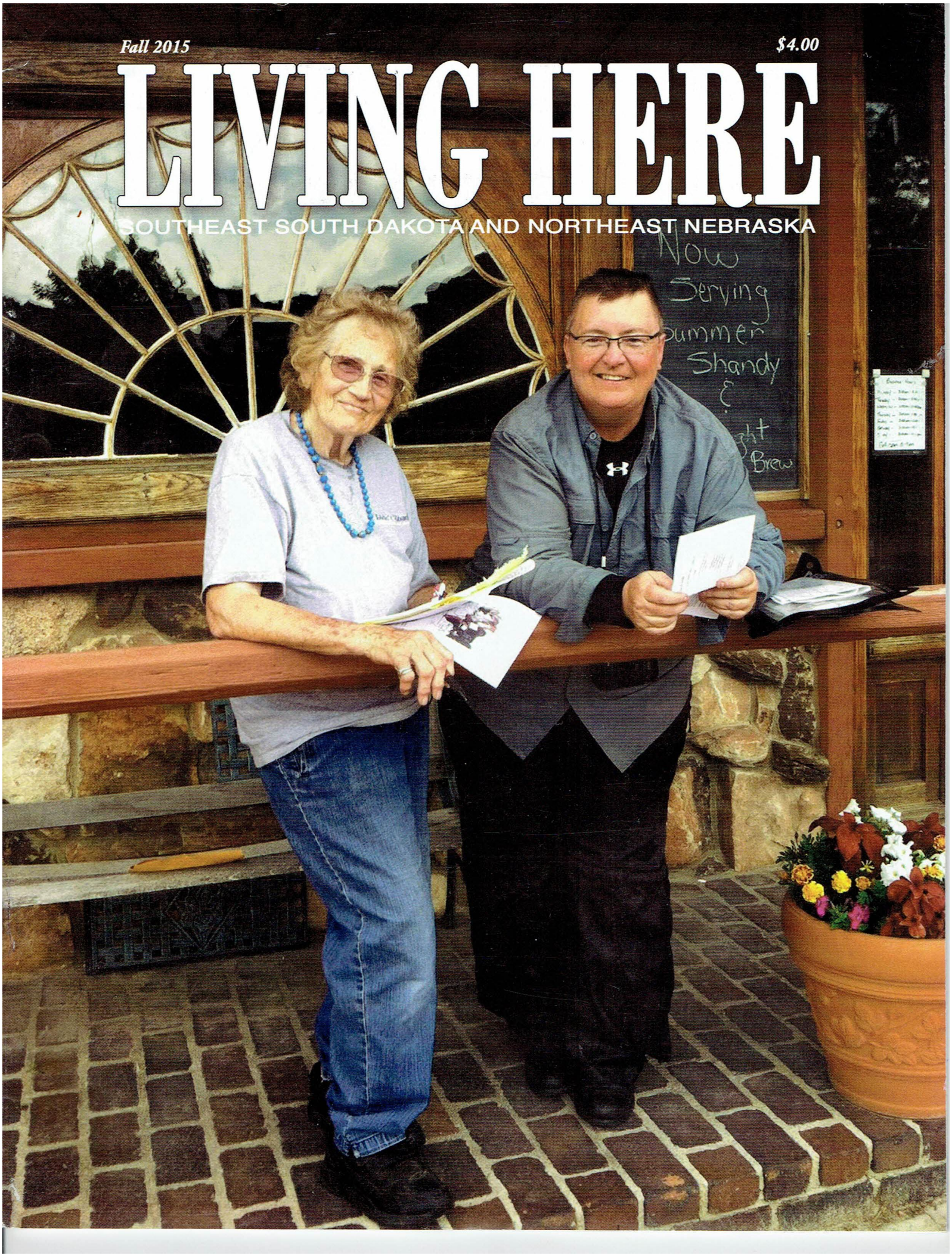
This is the legacy of Danny Liska; what's left behind. Books and whispers, pilgrimages and a man people still struggle to understand.

Some of the photos are gone, taken or damaged in a house flood. But the books, though out of print, can still be found.

But there are the stories of the man on the motorcycle, a homegrown Jack Kerouac who never stayed in one place too long, who traveled the world to see everything it had to offer and to experience it by diving in head first.

As Danny boasted in the back of his books, NEBRASKAland Magazine once said, "Think of the most fantastic events that could happen to a man, and they have probably happened to Danny."

Staff writer Andy Boyle contributed to this report.



2015-09 Motorcycle Legend Arlene Liska by Marita Placek, Living Here Magazine-1

Danny Dossman, a Team Strange rider, takes advice from Arlene Liska. (Photo by Greg Anderson).

2015-09 Motorcycle Legend Arlene Liska by Marita Placek, Living Here Magazine-2

Motorcycle Legend

ARLENE LISKA

Who needs four wheels when you've got a spirit of adventure that will carry you to four continents and more than 60 countries.

BY MARITA PLACEK

They sold their 125 head of cattle and left their Niobrara, Nebraska ranch on a BMW motorcycle. With confidence and a lot of faith, Arlene Liska and her then-husband, Danny, rode to the very tip of South America – some 40,000 miles away.

"I spent most of my time in the late 1950s and early 60s traveling the world, perched on the narrow seat of a BMW motorcycle with my feet resting on very small foot pegs," says Arlene. The bike had a large windshield and they wore helmets that covered their heads with a short sun bill, straps with open ears and a chin or neck strap to hold the helmets on. Two over-sized leather saddlebags hung on the sides, with a suitcase strapped on the back carrier that held a pop-up-tent, a couple changes of clothes, a parachute silk for sleeping bags, a primus stove, maps, passports, and canned food. They never carried a gun.

Arlene, who "wears the crown" for long distance motorcycle riding, spent a great deal of time traveling from continent to continent. "There were many interesting and exciting experiences," says Arlene. "I was nearly shot and escaped from being thrown in jail.

2015-09 Motorcycle Legend Arlene Liska by Marita Placek, Living Here Magazine-3

Steven Kirk, shows cycling pioneer Arlene Liska, his motorcycle and gear. (Photo courtesy of Jason Wessendorf, The Verdigre Eagle).

"I was chased by an angry, four-ton rhinoceros while on a ride in Central Africa. He was close to our speeding motorcycle so I desperately swatted his horns with my helmet while Danny was doing his best to get away from him."

When traveling through Panama's mosquito infested jungle, Arlene was tired and hungry, so she sat on a log to rest. When it started to move, she realized she was sitting on a 20-foot anaconda.

"We descended down inside the famous smoldering Irazu Volcano in Costa Rico," Arlene shares. "It was very hot in there. We heard later that the volcano had erupted – just before President Kennedy was scheduled to visit."

When at the United Fruit Company's banana plantation she had a run-in with an insect that caused her much grief. She felt an insect bite her knee, so she swatted it. That was the wrong thing to do. In just that short time, the insect – whose name eludes her – implanted eggs under her skin.

"I spent two weeks at the Panama City Medical Clinic (the United States still owned the Canal Zone) and my knee kept getting bigger and bigger. Finally they flew me to Offutt Air Force Base near Omaha. It took two more weeks of emitting eggs before they were able to treat the wound so I could go back and continue traveling. I still have a hole in my knee from the ordeal."

Another time, she was sleeping on the sand dunes of the African Sahara on a piece of a silk parachute used as a mattress. "These cute little 'three-tracked things' were running around. Later we found out that an 11-year-old boy was seriously ill after being stung by one of them, and that they were scorpions. The boy survived after a three month battle," says Arlene.

The Pan American Highway was in the beginning stages of construction when 24 inches of rain fell in one day in Costa Rica, causing dangerous flooding. With no bridge, there was no way for them to cross the Volcán River. They were trying to decide what to do when a highway maintainer came along and offered to take them and the motorcycle across the river. The bottom of the rivers there are rock, so it was possible for heavy equipment to cross. "The same maintainer operator took us over six more streams so we could safely reach Buenos Aires," said Arlene.

Suffering from malaria and doing laundry in a river were discouraging times. "You got sick, hungry, tired, you were broke, and there wasn't a direct bus home," says Arlene.

But there were joyful and fun times, too. Arlene made many friends among

the native people of countries she visited, and eventually learned eleven languages. "We traveled to learn from the people, but we had to be on guard because we were Americans and were judged by them. They had no idea where America was or how far it was."

Arlene wanted to buy some bananas when they were at the banana plantation in Costa Rica. "The natives laughed at me and said, 'One does not buy bananas here, you just take what you need and use what you take'. They even made a poultice out of them and the leaves to take the soreness out of my legs from riding, and told me lemons would help the chafing from the leather motorcycle pants. They both did wonders."

At border crossings they had to have a valid passport, several photo identifications, plus health and vaccination certificates, and police certificates verifying that they were honorable and not wanted by police. The Aduaneros' usually kept a copy after critically checking each passport stamp.

"I loved running my hands through a bushel of diamonds while in Africa," says Arlene. Ostriches peck the shiny diamonds that lay on top of the ground. They are then harvested from the gizzards of older ostriches that are no longer used for plumes."

"The African people admired my blonde hair and would come up and ask if they could feel it," says Arlene. "Spending the night on top of the pyramids to watch the morning sunrise was spectacular."

With a big grin, Arlene recalls the time she drove a train, switchback style, high up in the Altiplanto range of the Andes Mountains of Ecuador. "We were talking to the engineer as we were coming into the station. He pulled me into the cab of the train and told the people 'We now have a woman train driver!' The people waiting to board the train were horrified to see a woman driving. But the cowboys of the country – wearing sheepskin chaps, exhibiting red faces, and exposing their bare feet – were waving and cheering."

"Undertaking the trip without any type of communication, such as cell phones or GPS systems, had to have been daunting. And there were no roads

Arlene poses with the motorcycles she rode in more than 60 countries. The motorcycles are BMWs, and the one in the foreground was ridden through Europe and Africa. (Photo courtesy of North Central Public Power District).

in certain parts of the country then," says Steven Kirk, a Scotsman from Australia, who recently stopped in Niobrara to visit with Arlene. "I have a tracker system, and all I have to do is push a button if I get into trouble, and a helicopter will arrive on the scene."

"She was a trendsetter," says Kirk. "Everybody and their dog are making these sort of trips now, but she was the original. She is an inspiration to us all."

Motorcyclists, adventurists, and motorcycle clubs from all over the world stop in Niobrara to meet "the queen of endurance riding," seek her advice, listen to her adventure stories and gain inspiration.

Arlene was the guest speaker at the 2006 BMV Shop Open House in Holland, Michigan, and the Gilmore Museum of Antique Cars and Motorcycles annual show where she shared her stories about traveling in 60 different countries on a BMW motorcycle.

One of her biggest thrills was appearing on the television show, "To Tell the Truth" with Bill Cullen, Orson Bean, and Kitty Carlysle. When the question, "Will the real world traveler from Niobrara, Nebraska, please stand up," Arlene stood up and put Niobrara in the national spotlight. "Having my story broadcast on national television was very special," says Arlene.

In her presentations and visits with bikers from all over the world, Arlene offers advice and words of caution concerning motorcycles and wild animals. Unlike a car, the motorcycle offers little protection to its riders other than the ability to "get away." Elephants really don't forget and, if mistreated, will remember you the next time they see you. Rhinos don't run in a straight line when they are chasing you – it's more of a zigzag pattern.

Arlene often shared her story about being chased by a rhino and how she swung at it with her helmet. "Monkeys will steal parts right off your bike, however, baboons are worse. In lion country, you stay on your bike because if you get off, you'll be at their level and could be their dinner," says Arlene.

In the summer of 2002, the Minnesota 1000 and the Team Strange Poker Run began "a love affair" by setting up headquarters in Niobrara for their "Two Wheels to Niobrara" rally just so they could get acquainted with the woman whom they felt "wears the crown" in long distance motorcycle rid-

Steven Kirk, from Australia, is one of dozens of younger riders who have journeyed to Niobrara to meet Arlene. (Photo courtesy of Valorie Zach, Niobrara Tribune).

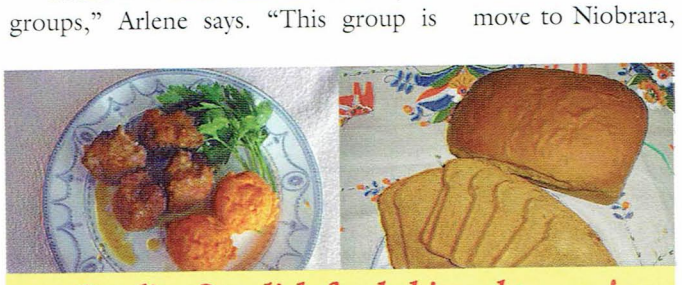
ing. Arlene was admitted into its elite 13-member leadership council, filling a vacancy due to a death the year before. Members have been frequent visitors to Niobrara since.

"There is a difference in motorcycle groups," Arlene says. "This group is gracious, folksy and sincere. Every single one of them came up and shook my hand. They bent over backwards for me, they really did."

2010 marked the 10th anniversary of the Team Strange Motorcycle Club's move to Niobrara, home of the Liskas. The organizers decided to mark the milestone with a grand event called the Minnesota 2000, where riders had to rack up 2,000 miles in two days. The bikers could ride anywhere in the United States or Canada, but had to be back in Minnesota in 48 hours.

Most bonus point locations were worth 25 to 200 points, depending on how difficult they were to get to, but if a rider stopped in Niobrara to say "hello" to Arlene, they received 1,000 bonus points. The checkpoint was only open from 1:30 to 3 p.m. on Friday afternoon, at the Two Rivers Saloon, where Arlene greeted riders. She gave each one a special purple ribbon made with her name on them. They in turn gave her a "Friend of the Rally" plaque.

Another way for riders to get bonus points was to attend Arlene's presentation, which was worth 1,960 points. The bikers were mesmerized as she

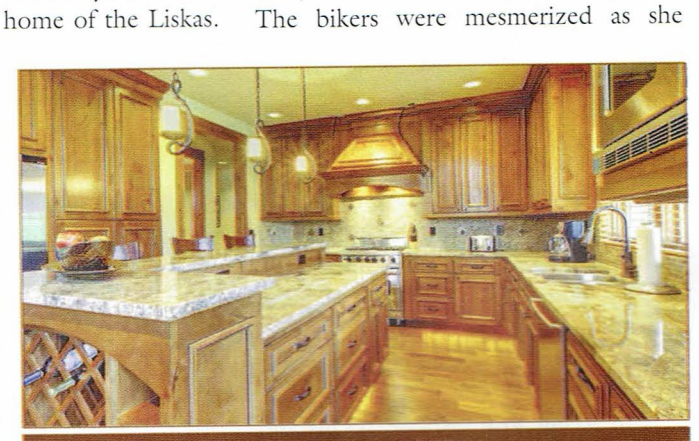


Quality Swedish food shipped to you!

We specialize in Swedish specialty food items shipped across the United States. Many of our recipes have been handed down through the generations and made right here at the store. We specialize in homemade Swedish Potato Sausage, Ostakaka and Swedish Rye Bread. Order online or give us a call! We'd love to hear from you and help you in any way!

Orders will be filled in 1-2 business days.
Preferred shipping days are Monday and Tuesday due to the need for dry ice.

Nelson's Food Pride
429 Oakland Avenue • Oakland, Nebraska 68045
402-685-5652
100 years of Swedish tradition!
www.nelsonsfoodpride.com



Dream kitchen...

Can be a reality. The time is right to buy, build or refinance, especially when you work with an experienced and reliable mortgage lender. See Gloria today!

FIRST DAKOTA
NATIONAL BANK
Yankton Downtown • 225 Cedar St • 665-7432
Yankton North • 2105 Broadway Ave • 665-4999
FirstDakota.com Member FDIC

spoke, with no travel log, only her memories. She talked about a beautiful pink palace she'd seen between Uruguay and Paraguay, attending a camel auction, and not knowing which side of the road to drive on in some countries, only to find out the hard way when she had to take the ditch when meeting an oncoming bus.

Much to the men's disbelief, Arlene revealed that she wore culottes (divided skirt), while riding in the cities, as it was not proper for women to wear pants in those days. She wore slacks while riding in the country. Both outfits were topped off with a leather jacket, beads and a necklace. The beads were used mainly for bartering.

Arlene talked about being detained in Brazil because it was absolutely illegal to bring an American vehicle into their country. "We were already several miles on Brazilian soil when we were arrested by a portico (immigration officer) who had a big six-shooter on his hip, and we were told to report to Porto Alegre (a city in Southern Brazil)," she says. "The Consulate told us there was another couple that had brought a vehicle into the northern part of Brazil. We asked, 'Well, what happened to them?' The consulate pondered with his hand cupping his chin, then poker faced said, 'I think we shot them!' We had to dismantle our bike for him to inspect. We couldn't go back, so we packed the motorcycle in a crate and found a Portuguese freighter to haul it to New York for us, leaving us to make our way through Brazil by any means possible, up the Amazon to Manaus and the mouth of the Amazon."

Among the souvenirs she displayed were tanned hides of a zebra and calamus monkey, Zulu bead work, a rhino horn, ebony statues, an African toothbrush, a goat skin water bag, a camel bell, maps, and an alpaca fur. When she held up her white motorcycle helmet, the bikers were enthralled because it was reminiscent of the times Arlene and Danny toured with just a windshield and two wheels.

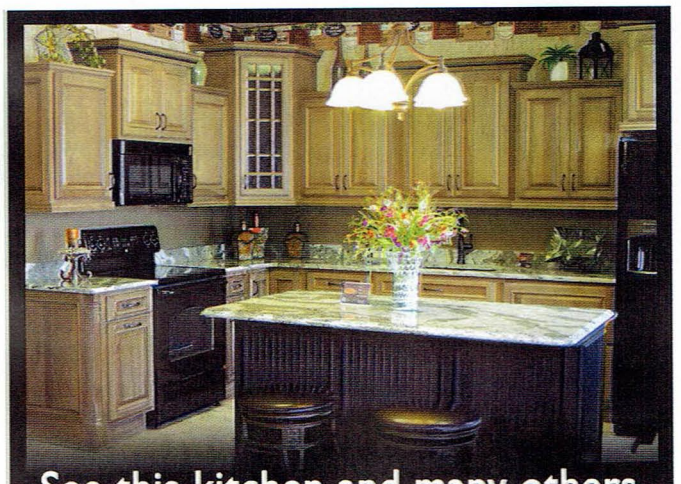
"I didn't pay $600 for this," she said. She wasn't exactly sure, but thought she'd paid about $15.

"Each country was different and had their own smell," she told the crowd. "The country folks, erupting mountains, thick musty jungle, arid dusty plains, steaming rains blending with the wild sounds of exotic birds and animals were all different. People were hospitable and one could always communicate, because everyone has basic needs. We used a lot of gestures to explain that we were sleepy, hungry or thirsty."

An unidentified biker was heard to say, "Niobrara is a kind of like a Mecca because it's where these people (Arlene and Danny) came from. They are my heroes, and I am working to get both of them into the Motorcycle Hall of Fame."

Arlene's encouraging words carried weight and were easily understood by the rally participants because they came from a vibrant woman who has become a legend in her own time: "You never get lost, you just change directions."

Marita Placek lives on a farm near Lynch, Nebraska.



See this kitchen and many others at The Kitchen Place in Yankton

Your new kitchen can be a unique expression of your own personal tastes and lifestyle. At The Kitchen Place, we'll work with you to create something that uniquely fits your life...and your budget. Stop in and visit with one of our talented designers.

See our showroom at:
309 West 11th St. • Yankton, SD
Open Mon. thru Fri.
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Saturday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Evenings by appointment
(605) 668-2168 or
1-800-249-3837
www.tkplaceyankton.com

the Kitchen Place
Over 7,300 References Available
SHOWPLACE Wood Products

We are a distributor selling direct to the public for less than the "no service" lumberyards.

I'm Linda, inviting you to our store to shop new fall fashions!

Arriving daily are denim and color capris, colorful spring tops, including three-fourth sleeve tops, skirts, dresses and jumpsuits...come in!

I'm a KIDS store! Infants, Toddlers, Boys 2-7, Girls 2T-4T, 4-14

Linda's Angel Crossing

1101 Broadway • Suite 103B • Morgen Square • Yankton, South Dakota
HOURS: Mon. thru Fri.10 a.m.-6 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
(605) 665-0080 • Fashions for newborns to 90!
www.lindasangelcrossing.com

2018-02-05 Bob Higdon takes a little trip, LD Riders

The improbable transformation of Danny Liska from a Nebraska farmer to the worldwide poster boy of BMW motorcycles in the early '60s began with his dream to ride a BMW street bike to the Yukon river in Alaska. He did, stuck the front wheel in the river, then turned around and rode to the bottom of South America. Along the way he walked the 67 miles of impenetrable jungle between the Panama canal and Colombian border known as the Darien gap. You could not open a bike rag in those days without seeing his picture. A few years later he made a similar pole-to-pole ride from Norway to South Africa.

In 1989 he self-published the story of the first ride as "Two Wheels to Adventure: Alaska to Argentina by Motorcycle." The book is unforgettable, but not in the way you might think. Danny's world was, like his photos, black and white. In the book's almost 800 pages there is not a hint of subtlety or nuance. He both wrote and rode straight forward and with blunt force.

But when I had a chance to meet him at the same motorcycle rally in July 1990 where I met Helge Pedersen, our current group's leader, I couldn't pass up the chance. I remember the brief meeting still. I said something he liked and he enveloped me in an enormous bear hug. I also asked him what the road to Alaska had been like. He said that the road, unpaved then in its entirety, had been as difficult a ride as he would ever take. "I never saw anything but the gravel 50 feet ahead of my front tire."

When Danny Liska died in 1995 of leukemia, some of the great lies of his life unraveled. Not only had his incredible expeditions not been solo outings, he'd ridden almost every mile of all of them with his wife, Arlene. And at some point, having fallen under the spell of a Colombian succubus named Regina 11, he'd not only divorced Arlene but expunged any record of her from his book and his photos. How could he have done that? I don't know. Maybe his middle name was Icarus.

Biographical Statement of Daniel Jay Liska and Arlene Block Liska in Support of a Joint Application for Admission to the American Motorcyclist Association's Hall of Fame

Ride to any of the wild places in the world today — the windswept steppes of Central Asia, the breathless Altiplano of South America, the frozen tundra of the Arctic — and you're likely to be following tire tracks laid down by adventurers like yourself. Follow them onward and they could lead you to any of the four points of the compass. But trace them back to their source and you'll end up in Niobrara, Nebraska, birthplace of Danny Liska, who with his wife Arlene laid the foundations for adventure touring, inspiring not only generations of two-wheeled world travelers but also the dual-sport motorcycle design pioneered by BMW in 1981. These two nominees to the AMA's Hall of Fame set motorcycling and the motorcycle industry on a new course.

At the age of 12 Danny found a Standard Oil map of the Pan-American Highway. "When nobody was watching," he wrote years later, "I would pull it out from beneath my bed, and over and over again plan my life of adventure along the longest road in the world — from the northernmost wastes of Alaska to the southern tip of South America."

On his 16th birthday he bought his first motorcycle, a 1936 Harley-Davidson. Three years later he met Arlene Block, like Danny born into a family of Nebraska farmers. They were married on May 12, 1951.

In 1958 he bought a BMW R60. In late July of the following year he set out for Alaska. Over seven weeks he spent a total of $200; dipped the front wheel of the bike into the Yukon River at Circle City, Alaska; obtained an Alaskan title and license plate for the motorcycle; and returned to Niobrara via a bike gathering in Dodge City, Kansas, where he won an award for the longest distance traveled. If there is an earlier instance of a rider from the continental U.S. reaching this far north on two wheels, we are unaware of it.

Press reaction to Liska's trip was immediate. It was reported in newspapers and magazines, including the December issue of *American Motorcycling* (the official publication of the then-named American Motorcycle Association). He was invited to write a weekly column called *Fancy Free* in the newspaper in Plainview, Nebraska. In his first column he expressed a longing to return to the road with his bike.

In the spring of 1960 he did just that, packing the R60 again and heading south along the red line on the Standard Oil map to the bottom of South America, a trip he'd been dreaming of for almost 20 years. In late October Arlene flew to

San Jose, Costa Rica, to ride with her husband to the end of the highway in Panama. It was the rainy season, the Pan-American Highway was under active construction, and 39 rivers ─ few of which had a bridge ─ stood in their way. It took them a month to ride just 530 miles, but they made it. Arlene flew back to Nebraska to tend to the farm while Danny continued south to face his next challenge in the Darien Gap, 70 miles of nearly impenetrable jungle south of the Panama Canal to the northern border of Colombia.

He sent his bike to Medellín, Colombia, by air freight and prepared to walk through an area that few non-indigenous natives had seen since Balboa's crossing of the isthmus nearly 450 years earlier. The hike took more than two weeks, and was of such epic difficulty that when he wrote a history of his ride years later, *Two Wheels to Adventure,* the Darien section occupied nearly one-quarter of the 755-page book.

At the customs office in Turbo, Colombia, where he arrived five days before Christmas in 1960, he was asked whether he had come from Panama by air or sea. When he said he had walked, they didn't believe him. Two days of paperwork and telephone calls later, he rode on top of a bus to Medellín to retrieve his motorcycle, where he discovered the R60's final drive was shot.

Butler & Smith, the importer of BMW motorcycles in North America, had heard of Danny's odyssey and sensed an advertising opportunity. They shipped the needed parts to Medellín, asking only to be repaid at the journey's end.

Fewer than 6,000 miles lay between Medellín and Ushuaia at the southernmost tip of South America. An experienced endurance rider today can make that ride in two weeks; it took Danny eight months. He faced mere dirt tracks where today there are paved highways, and he was a self-confessed slave to riding regardless of the conditions. He reached Ushuaia in the middle of the southern hemisphere's winter on August 23, 1961, but he had done what no one had before him had accomplished, riding from where the road stopped in the north of the western hemisphere to where it stopped in the south.

He took a freighter to Punta Arenas where he left the BMW buried in a casket of international paperwork. He then hitchhiked to Buenos Aires, hoping to find money from Arlene at a postal general delivery. There was nothing.

He heard about an American movie company looking for extras who could ride a horse for a movie called *Taras Bulba* in early production in Salta, Argentina. After shaving his head, he became Yul Brynner's stand-in and stunt double. The pay was only about $600, and he had to sue United Artists to get it, but the publicity of the trip and concomitant celebrity had made him a star on his return to Niobrara in January 1962.

Butler & Smith again came to Danny's aid, convincing BMW to donate a bike for him to pick up in Europe and emulate the ride he had made in North and

South America. When Arlene, having been a functional widow for more than a year, heard of the proposal, she told a newspaper reporter, "If he's going to Europe, I'm going with him."

The pair spent the spring and summer of 1963 winding their way through Central and South America, arranging the repatriation of Danny's bike from Chile and supporting themselves by writing travel stories for local newspapers back in Nebraska. In late August of 1963 they flew to Germany for what would be the last great ride of their lives.

No solo rider, much less a couple, had ever documented a ride from the north cape of Norway to Cape Agulhus, the southernmost part of South Africa. After picking up their donated bike and outfitting it for the ride, they headed north, reaching Nordkapp in mid-September. There they turned around and headed south and west, finally taking a ferry from Spain across the Straits of Gibraltar to Morocco in January 1964.

During the spring they followed the Mediterranean coastline east to Cairo, then turned due south to track the Nile, part of the way on a paddle steamer, to Lake Victoria. They looped back north and east through Kenya to Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Yemen to the border of Saudi Arabia. There they retreated back across the Red Sea, trekked south through Somalia in the middle of summer, and caught a small boat back to Kenya.

In September they crossed present-day Tanzania to the border of northern Rhodesia, a country in the final stages of a civil war of independence and tribal massacres. They were held up for weeks at border crossings and spent somber days riding slowly through burned villages.

On October 28, 1964, the Omaha *World-Herald* reported on its front page that the Liskas had arrived in Johannesburg, South Africa. Shortly thereafter they rode down to Cape Agulhas, where the Indian and Atlantic oceans meet. Forty thousand miles and almost 15 months lay in their wake, but they had completed their quest.

When they landed in Chicago on December 8, snow made motorcycle travel back to Niobrara inadvisable. The globe-trotting farm couple who had ridden to the ends of the Earth in two hemispheres on a motorcycle designed for use on paved roads, returned home in a 1947 pickup truck.

The investment that BMW and Butler & Smith had made in the Liskas had been a good one. Beginning in January 1966 Danny and Arlene were featured in a series of full-page ads in national motorcycle magazines that ran for more than a year. Arguably the pinnacle of the Liska fairy tale arrived on March 10, 1966, when Arlene was a guest on the popular television program, *To Tell the Truth*. Not surprisingly she stumped three of the four panelists, who were looking for a

tough, road-hardened biker, not someone who might easily be mistaken for Beaver Cleaver's mom.

In 1968 Danny separated from Arlene, reclaimed the family farm as his own, and for the remainder of his life shuffled between Niobrara and Colombia, where he died in 1995 from leukemia. Arlene lives on, now 92, in Niobrara, her memories of days camped in a tent at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro only slightly dimmed.

Danny was inventive and unusually resourceful. When he recognized a problem with his R60, he fixed it, fabricating a bash plate, a reinforced sub-frame, raised front fender, and auxiliary fuel capacity. It would take BMW more than 15 years to deliver what he had needed, the 1981 R80G/S, the motorcycle that won four Paris-Dakar rallies. A considerable body of opinion today treats that machine as not only a lineal descendant of Danny Liska's ingenuity but a design that saved the motorcycle division of the company from financial ruin. For the first time a true adventure bike was available directly from a manufacturer, and with it the sport of motorcycle adventure touring was born.

Last month the motorcycle website Adventure Rider (www.advrider.com) had almost three million hits. Hundreds of the visitors to the site are on the road this very minute in as many different countries. Each of them has been inspired, directly or indirectly, by the mythic travels of a modest couple from northeast Nebraska. One of those riders, Ed Culberson, advised and assisted by Danny himself, rode his own R80G/S through the Darien Gap in 1986, the first vehicle of any kind to traverse what had been to that point an impenetrable jungle. That bike, *Amigo*, resided in the AMA museum in 1994-1995.

For their pioneering rides that defined what we now call adventure touring, and for their contributions to what is today one of the most robust market segments in all of motorcycling, Danny and Arlene Liska surely deserve joint admission into the American Motorcyclist Association’s Hall of Fame.